This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

PREPARATION
FOR
CONFIRMATION.

600100565N

PREPARATION

FOR

CONFIRMATION.

BY THE

REV. RICHARD LOWNDES, M.A.,

VICAR OF STURMINSTER NEWTON, DORSETSHIRE.

OXFORD and LONDON:

JOHN HENRY AND JAMES PARKER.

1864.

138. g. 1.

BIBLIOTHECA · BODLEIANA ·
DOMI NUS ILLU MINA TIO MEA

PRINTED BY MESSRS. PARKER, CORNMARKET, OXFORD.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.

PREPARATION 1

CHAPTER II.

THE FALL 6

CHAPTER III.

THE REMEDY 12

CHAPTER IV.

HOLY BAPTISM 22

CHAPTER V.

THE BAPTISMAL VOW: REPENTANCE . . 32

CHAPTER VI.

THE BAPTISMAL VOW: FAITH . . . 41

CHAPTER VII.

THE BAPTISMAL VOW: OBEDIENCE . . 84

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND SACRAMENT . . . 107

PREFACE.

THE object of this tract is to furnish a text-book to be read with candidates for Confirmation. It simply points out a line of instructtion to be taken. It suggests matter which may be enlarged on and more fully explained to the class.

The difficulty of getting candidates to retain for any length of time the information imparted to them during their attendance at the "Confirmation Classes," must have been too often experienced to need any pointing out.

It is thought possible, however, that if the *groundwork* of the instruction to be given is put before the candidates in such a shape as is presented in this tract, and is left in their hands, then the fuller explanations of the various subjects treated of and the larger information to be built on this may obtain a surer and more enduring hold on their minds and memories than at present, in too many instances, they appear to do.

NOTE.

It will be observed that some references are given in the text of this tract and some are transferred (for greater convenience) to the notes at the foot of each page. It is hoped, however, that in every case the reader will carefully turn to the passages indicated.

Preparation for Confirmation.

CHAPTER I.

PREPARATION.

PREPARATION for Confirmation! How important a matter is this, since so much depends upon it.

Very serious indeed is the duty to be undertaken at Confirmation: unspeakably great is the blessing to be then sought of God. And how that duty will be performed, and how large a share of God's grace and blessing will be obtained, must depend very much upon the manner in which persons *prepare* themselves to come before the Lord.

There are two parts in this needful preparation: there is the preparing of the heart, and the preparing of the mind. These are not of equal importance: since a person who is *in earnest*, although extremely ignorant, may rightly present himself for Confirmation, and obtain God's precious gifts; while the best-informed person in all the world, if he be not faithful and sincere, will receive no blessing.

Still both are deeply necessary. Earnestness is so essential, that without it no grace will be bestowed: and certainly, if we profess to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and to hold the Christian faith, we should understand the principles of that faith, and be "ready

to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us[a]."

"The preparations of the heart in man," says Solomon, "and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord[b]." These coming weeks of preparation, then, should be a time for very earnest prayer to God,—for seeking at His hands the grace you need. Give yourselves now to God with a serious intention of your hearts. Put away, as far as may be, worldly thoughts, amusements, interests. Fix your whole mind on the one great business which lies before you. Remember that this may be the turning-point of life with you, the point from whence you may go on happily from strength to strength, till at the last you may receive a never-fading crown of glory; or the point from whence you may start miserably on a downward course, where you may pass at once and for ever within the "wide gate," and enter on the "broad way" that "leadeth to destruction[c]." With many Confirmation is *the turning point in life.* Think of it as such.

Remember, too, that *once only* in all your lives may you come to be confirmed. Many things may you do often; and if sometimes through carelessness or neglect you have done these ill, the fault may be repaired and amended at some future time. But it is not so with Confirmation. Once only do you present yourselves before the Lord; once only do you stand out before God and the Church, to confirm and renew in your own persons your Baptismal promises; once only may the Bishop's hands rest solemnly on your heads, while

[a] 1 Pet. iii. 15. [b] Prov. xvi. 1. [c] Matt. vii. 13.

the prayer is offered up that you may "increase in God's Holy Spirit more and more until you come unto His everlasting kingdom." And if on that one occasion you come with careless and ungodly minds; if then you do only draw nigh unto God with your mouths, while your hearts are far from Him; if you come with a lie on your lips, to utter promises which you never wish to keep, to ask for God's precious gifts which you do not care to have, certainly you must forfeit and lose for ever the peculiar blessing of Confirmation.

Pray that it be not so with you. Pray God that you may be earnest and sincere.

And while you pray Him to prepare your hearts for this serious duty, give all diligence yourselves, make every effort, use every means to be brought into a fitting frame of mind. Let these weeks of preparation be weeks of solemn *training* for the coming work of Confirmation.

Confirmation! What, then, is this? What are its duties and its blessings? What are you to *do* in this, and what may you *receive?* There are two parts in Confirmation:—

1. There is your work and duty; which is to confirm, ratify, and take upon yourselves, and renew with your own lips the promises made in your names by your godparents at your Baptism. You come forward at Confirmation to promise that you will "renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh: that you will believe all the articles of the Christian faith: and that you will keep God's holy will and commandments, and

walk in the same all the days of your life." You *come* to declare that you will, God helping you, *continue* Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto your life's end. This is your part.

2. God's promises are confirmed and assured to you. Once, at your Baptism, you were made members of Christ; thus you became children of God; and you received the precious gift of God's Holy Spirit, and were promised (conditionally) an eternal inheritance in heaven. This promise is now assured again and confirmed to you; that gift of the Holy Spirit is increased and enlarged in you, if you seek it with humble, earnest, faithful, and penitent hearts. The blessed influences of the Holy Spirit you have, indeed, already been made partakers of; all your life through you have been objects of His care; every good thought or holy desire that you ever had did proceed from the Holy Ghost. But now His grace is to be confirmed, strengthened, increased in you; and that which was one while only as the gentle dew, shall now fall on you in larger and more refreshing showers, even "like rain upon the mown grass."

Here let the Confirmation Service be read over.

Then refer to Heb. vi. 1, 2, and notice how St. Paul places the "laying on of hands," (which, following as it does in this passage, immediately after "the doctrine of Baptism," has always been held to refer to the laying on of the Bishop's hands in Confirmation,)—notice how St. Paul places this among "the principles," the first and simplest truths "of the doctrine of Christ." Then turn to Acts viii. 14—17, and Acts xix. 1—6,

and thence learn the Apostolic practice;—how the Apostles laid their hands on those who had been baptized, and how immediately the Holy Ghost was given: not given then for the first time entirely, since it was by the grace and operation (or working) of the Holy Spirit that they were first grafted into Christ at Baptism[d]; but given then in so large a measure, and with such extraordinary power, that the gift became manifest unto all men through its miraculous effects.

It is the gift and presence of this same Holy Spirit,—not that He may work in you with the extraordinary and miraculous power which was manifested among the early Christians, since this is no longer necessary, but that He may fill you full of all His ordinary graces, that He may direct, sanctify, and govern you in all your ways,—it is this priceless gift of the Holy Spirit which you seek to obtain; it is this which will most surely be given you, if you are *fitted* to become "temples of the Holy Ghost[e]." By this Holy Spirit's influence you will be confirmed in the ways and works of godliness, if your hearts are prepared to receive Him when you present yourselves before the Lord for Confirmation.

Pray, then, that you may be so fitted and prepared. Pray that by no carelessness or folly of your own you may hinder the grace of God. Pray that you may never, either now or while you live, "resist the Holy Ghost[f]."

[d] 1 Cor. xii. 13. [e] Ibid. vi. 19. [f] Acts vii, 51.

CHAPTER II.

THE FALL.

And now let us proceed to some statement of those principles of our faith with which the minds of Christians should be fully furnished and instructed.

The first important truth which we have to learn and to confess is the sinfulness and corruption of man's *fallen* nature,—the fact that we are all born in sin, and are children of wrath, that is, children who on account of their sinfulness deserve God's wrath and anger. See in the following texts how Holy Scripture teaches this: —Eph. ii. 1—3; Rom. v. 12; Gen. viii. 21; 1 John i. 8; Jer. xvii. 9; Ps. li. 5, lviii. 3; Job xiv. 4.

God *created* man pure and holy, and in His own image[g]. Man's nature, as God first made it, was good. This is certain, because our Lord Jesus Christ took upon Him "human nature," and was without sin; proving thereby that in that nature itself there was no inherent sinfulness. By "human nature" we understand *that* which all men have in common, and which distinguishes men from all other creatures; such as bodily shape, bodily powers, reason, memory, speech, conscience, will, and soul and spirit. This "human nature" our Lord took upon Himself, and became a man, and yet was without sin[h].

This taking upon Himself "human nature," this being made flesh and becoming a man,—so becoming a man that He, Who was God from everlasting, from thence-

[g] Gen. ix. 6.

[h] Heb. ii. 14—16; Phil. ii. 7, 8; Heb. iv. 15; John i. 14.

forth became both God and Man, perfect God and perfect Man, uniting in His one person the two distinct natures, the Divine and Human, the Godhead and the Manhood, without any change of either or confusion of the two,—this is it which we mean by the "incarnation" of our Lord Jesus Christ; to believe which rightly is necessary to everlasting salvation[i].

Every part of man's nature, then, was good as God first made it; and it only required some guiding power to be added to keep all the different parts in order, to restrain, and rule, and direct them.

By "the parts of man's nature" we mean man's appetites, passions, powers of reasoning, will or habit of choosing.

Man had not the guiding power in himself. It was a Divine power, given by God. That power, that "guiding light," was the Holy Spirit, with whose influence Adam was blessed while he lived in God's presence and communed with the Lord God in the Garden of Eden. Then, in Eden, all the several parts of man's nature were kept by that Holy Spirit in perfect order; man's will and the inclination of his heart and mind were well directed, and Adam was innocent and without sin.

To man, thus made, God decreed a time of trial, to prove him, and to see whether he would be obedient or not, before he was finally admitted into heaven. God permitted Satan to tempt man[j]. Man yielded to the temptation and disobeyed the express command of his Maker.

[i] Athanasian Creed. [j] Gen. iii.

And observe here, that we are not to think or speak lightly of our first parents' sin, as if the mere eating the forbidden fruit was a trifling matter. Disobedience and rebellion, disbelieving God's word, discontent and ingratitude, this was in reality the sin of Adam and Eve,—a sin most surely deserving of God's deepest indignation.

Upon his disobedience God banished man from His presence. Being so banished, man lost that guiding Power, that Divine Light which had been given to direct and keep him in all his ways: then the different parts of his nature fell into confusion, his appetites and passions were no longer well-ordered and directed, these all became unruly and hard to govern; his will, or habit of choosing, was perverted and corrupted, so that his heart became naturally inclined to evil and disinclined to good: and man was no longer righteous, but only sinful and wicked.

Sin comes from our not exercising our will, our habit and power of choosing, aright. On the subject of man's will let it be observed here that the difference between man before and after the Fall was this: before the Fall he was *liable* indeed, but *not disposed* to sin, since the Divine grace directed him aright; after his fall, and upon the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit's influence, he became actually disposed and inclined to sin. Thenceforth his will was not a good one, but a bad one; the inclination of his heart was to choose the evil and refuse the good. And so it fell, that although his will was still free, although there was ever a secret consciousness of that freedom,

although there was no compulsion and no sort of necessity for choosing evil and refusing good, yet the bias of his fallen nature towards evil was so strong and his natural inclination so perverted, that practically he could not of himself prefer what is good and holy, and the grace of God was needed to induce him to turn and seek after righteousness: which grace, however, be it added, is never wanting to those who seek it.

Sin comes, too, from our not restraining or keeping in order those different parts of our nature which yet are good when they *are well ordered*. For instance, to indulge our appetite, our natural desire to eat, in moderation is a good thing and intended by God, while to eat to excess is gluttony and sin; or to indulge our natural desire for rest and to refresh our bodies with sleep is a good thing, while to rest or sleep too much becomes idleness and sloth, and this again is sin; or to love is good, but to love any creature too much, with inordinate affection[k], or more than we love God, is sin.

When man lost the divine guiding Light, being banished from God's presence, when man's will was no longer directed, and his appetites and passions no longer restrained and kept in order by the Holy Spirit, then he became at once sinful and corrupt. And this state of disorder and corruption is what we mean by original or birth-sin—the sinful state in which we are all born.

Original sin consists in that "confusion" which

[k] Col. iii. 5.

took place in man's nature, in that corruption of his will, in that perversion of his heart, in that disposition to evil which followed upon the loss of the divine guiding Light.

(Observe, Christ could yet take our nature and be without sin; because, while He took "human nature," He was Himself the guiding Light[l] which could preserve that nature in perfect harmony and order.)

Sin deprived man of intercourse with God. The first effect of sin was to make man shun the presence of the Almighty: Adam and Eve hid themselves[m], and the Lord God sent them forth from His presence[n]. In after years the declaration of the Prophet Isaiah[o] was,—"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God: and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." And to be restored to this communion and intercourse with God is our highest blessing: thus our Lord declares, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent[p]." The first blessed result, too, of Christ's finished work on earth was the gift of the Holy Ghost—the descent of the Holy Spirit, that the Lord God might dwell among men.

Not that God wholly and entirely withdrew Himself from men. No! He still guided them in some degree, speaking to them through their consciences. To this allusion is made in Rom. ii. 15. And St. Paul refers to this partial, but not entire, withdrawal of God's

[l] John i. 9. [m] Gen. iii. 8. [n] Ibid. 23.
[o] *Isa. lix. 2.* [p] John xvii. 3.

influence in his speech recorded in Acts xiv. 16, 17. In Gen. vi. 3, again, we find evidence that God left not man wholly to his own devices and unassisted by the Divine influence. It is needful to bear this in mind, that we may the better learn and be able to understand how that God is not unrighteous[q] even though He taketh vengeance on the unenlightened heathen world. Still, while God so far guided men as to make them justly responsible for their actions, yet He at the same time withdrew His guidance to so great a degree as to suffer man's nature to fall into disorder, and his heart to become corrupt and inclined to evil. Into this state or condition all we children of Adam are born,—into this state of disorder, corruption, and inclination to evil. And this corrupted state is what we call original sin.

[q] Rom. iii. 5.

CHAPTER III.

THE REMEDY.

To bring us out of this unhappy state, to remedy this disorder of our nature, is the very object of God's scheme of redemption as revealed in the Gospel. For this very end Christ became a man. The disorder in our nature arose out of our loss of that guiding Light, which Adam once enjoyed, but forfeited through his disobedience. Christ, therefore, who is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world[r]," in His mercy was made flesh and dwelt among us, that the Divine Light might once more shine upon our darkness[s]. Christ took our nature and thus joined Himself to us, in order that we might be joined to Him and be made partakers of His nature[t], that we might receive of His divine strength and of His "fulness[u];" and so being once more divinely guided and called "out of darkness into His marvellous light[v]," might be saved from our old corruption and disorder, which we inherited from Adam, and "through Him (Christ) have access by one Spirit unto the Father[w]."

The means whereby this bringing out of darkness into light is effected in us is *union with Christ*. As by our descent from and union with Adam we were born in a corrupt state, so by union with Christ, the "last Adam[x]," we are delivered from that state of corrup-

[r] John i. 9, viii. 12. [s] Luke i. 78, 79. [t] 2 Pet. i. 4.
[u] John i. 16. [v] 1 Pet. ii. 9.
[w] *Ephes. ii. 18.* [x] 1 Cor. xv. 45.

tion[y]. Christ is the root whence we derive all grace and spiritual life[z]. From Christ, and through our union with Him, we are made partakers of all spiritual blessings; for what Christ hath Himself, this same He doth impart to all His faithful members. Thus is it, through union with our Lord, that we receive the great gift of the Holy Ghost. Jesus having finished His work on earth, ascended into heaven, to receive this precious gift[a] for men—this gift of the Holy Spirit, that the Lord God might dwell among us to guide, direct, enlighten and sanctify our hearts. And of this gift we are made partakers through our union with the Saviour[b].

Observe here the two great parts of Christ's work on earth—the two great ends for which He came into the world: 1. To save us from the consequences of sin; 2. To save us from the power of sin.

The consequences of sin are death, and the incurring of God's anger, and the forfeiture of God's favour. Death is the punishment of sin[c]; eternal death is what sinners deserve. This punishment Christ bore in our stead. He gave His life a ransom for ours[d]. We deserved to die, but Christ died in our place[e]. Upon the cross He made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world[f]. (We see a type and foreshadowing of this great sacrifice of Christ in all those lesser sacrifices

[y] Rom. v. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 22. [z] 1 John v. 11, 12; John v. 26; 1 Cor. xv. 45. [a] Ps. lxviii. 18. [b] Gal. iv. 6; Titus iii. 6. [c] Rom. vi. 23. [d] Matt. xx. 28. [e] 1 Pet. ii. 24; 1 Cor. xv. 3. [f] Isa. liii.

which were offered under the Law[g].) Christ having thus borne the penalty due to sin, and having satisfied that Divine justice which had long ago declared that if man sinned man should die,—Christ having become a man, and as a man having endured the punishment of death, it became possible for the just anger of God to be turned away from man[h], God could be reconciled to the world, and man could be forgiven and restored to the light of God's countenance[i].

This is one part of Christ's work, He has saved us from the consequences of sin. The other, and equally important part is, that He saves us from the power of sin—from sin itself[k]: this He does by giving us back and renewing in us that guiding light of the Holy Spirit[l] which Adam forfeited, and by imparting to our souls through union with Himself sufficient grace and strength to enable us to resist sin, and to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil[m].

Our Lord hath shewn us the way of righteousness, He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps; and not only this, but He likewise imparts to us spiritual strength and grace to help us in our time of need. For it is the very aim of Him, Who is made unto us "righteousness and sanctification[n]," *to conform us to His own image*, to beget us in His own likeness, that He may be "the Firstborn among many brethren[o]."

Christ, then, is the root whence we derive all spiri-

[g] Heb. ix. 22. [h] Rom. iii. 25, 26. [i] Acts xiii. 38; 2 Cor. v. 18, 19; Col. i. 19—22; Rom. v. 1. [k] Matt. i. 21; Acts iii. 26. [l] Titus iii. 5. [m] John xv. 5; 1 John iii. 6, *v. 4, 5.* [n] *1 Cor.* i. 30. [o] Rom. viii. 29.

tual life and blessing. As by our natural descent from and union with Adam we inherit weakness, corruption, and death; so by our spiritual union with Christ we receive strength, and righteousness, and eternal life. For just as Adam's disobedience affected the whole human race, and brought upon it guilt and misery; so the effects of Christ's obedience, of His meritorious Cross and Passion, of His life of perfect holiness, are imparted to all the faithful members of His Body.

Observe again here, that as that original sinfulness which we inherit from Adam is not something external to ourselves, but something ingrained in our nature and constantly developing itself in *actual* sin; so, in like manner, that righteousness which is by Jesus Christ[p] must not remain something only external to us, but must become a very part of our renewed nature[q], and must develope itself in that *holiness of heart, and character, and disposition*, possessing which we may become "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light[r]," but "without which no man shall see the Lord[s]." To acquire this holiness[t] of character and "conversation[u]," remember, is the very work and business of our lives; and except that work be perfected in us, we shall have received the grace of God in vain[x]. The object of Christ's work on earth, and the end for which He uniteth us unto Himself, is to make us new

[p] Phil. i. 11. [q] Rom. vi. 17—22. [r] Col. i. 12. [s] Heb. xii. 14.

[t] Holiness of life consists in our growing more and more like unto Christ, as we yield our hearts and wills to the influence of His grace, and suffer ourselves, our characters and dispositions, to be moulded and fashioned in the likeness of our Lord.

[u] 1 Pet. i. 15. [x] 2 Cor. v. 21, vi. 1.

creatures[y]: Christ lived, and died, and rose again in order that we might be "renewed in the spirit of our mind," and "put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness[z]," and constantly "maintain" those "good works[a]" which "God hath before ordained that we should walk in them[b]." Our Lord came not to save us *in* our sins, but "*from* our sins[c]." He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works[d]." Let this be ever kept in mind.

We are not to imagine that at the Day of Judgment the righteousness and perfect obedience of Christ will be so accounted as ours, as that it shall be unimportant what our lives on earth have been. As it is not for Adam's sin only, and without any reference to their own actual sinfulness, that men will be punished hereafter; so neither is it for Christ's obedience only and without any reference to our own past lives that we are to be rewarded[e]; but we shall be accepted by God *for the sake* of Christ's merits *conditionally upon* our own obedience and godly living; an obedience springing, indeed, out of Christ's obedience, having its root therein, produced altogether of His grace, but still created in us, and rendered by us, and so made our own. For while it is most true that any obedience of ours, even when done under God's grace, must be most imperfect, and therefore does not and cannot deserve any favour at God's hands, and can only be acceptable

[y] 2 Cor. v. 17. [z] Eph. iv. 23, 24. [a] Tit. iii. 8.
[b] *Eph. ii. 10.* [c] Matt. i. 21. [d] Tit. ii. 14. [e] Matt. xvi. 27.

on account of the perfection of Christ's obedience; yet is it equally true that every man will be judged according to his works hereafter[f], and that the righteous only[g], and they that have done the will of their Father which is in heaven[h], shall be suffered to enter the kingdom of heaven[i].

The merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, apprehended by us through faith[k], are the *one sole cause* of our acceptance with the Eternal Father, but a fixed unchangeable *condition* of our acceptance is our own personal holiness, love, obedience, (which are the fruits of faith); or else such true and earnest repentance as would certainly produce these, if time and opportunity were granted.

The idea, that God will *impute* to us at the last that righteousness of Christ which had not during our lives found any place in our hearts, nor ever been reflected

[f] Rev. xx. 12. [g] Matt. xxv. 46. [h] Ib. vii. 21. [i] Rom. ii. 6—9.

[k] Let it be remembered here what the exact office of faith is. When we are said to be "justified by faith," it is not meant that it is the act of believing which of itself justifies us; we are justified only by the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour: we are merely said to be justified ,by faith because it is through faith that we apprehend or lay hold on Christ. Faith is as much an act of the mind and intellect as any of the things which we reckon among good works are acts of the heart and body. To rely, therefore, on faith, on the *act of believing*, as a ground of acceptance with God, would be to depend for salvation on ourselves, on some work or merit of our own, and *not on Christ only*. Yet forasmuch as faith is the moving power within us, the source whence all our searchings after Christ do spring, it were hardly possible to speak too highly of its importance and its blessedness. Faith is to us here in this life what sight will be hereafter,—the means whereby the soul realizes and is enraptured with the ineffable glory and goodness of its God.

in our characters and dispositions, and then, and on account of that righteousness, accept us, despite our past habitual wilful sin, is a mere delusion, and a most fatal error.

But let us pause a moment to notice the immense difference there is between our obedience, and love, and holiness being the *cause* and their being the *condition* of our acceptance with Almighty God.

Obedience to be the *cause* of our acceptance, obedience which could *deserve* an eternal reward hereafter, must be *perfect* obedience; such as was contemplated under the Mosaic dispensation, when God declared, "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them[1]." But to render such obedience is, and ever has been, (since the fall of Adam) impossible to man. Who is there that could look on his own life and imagine that he has ever rendered, or ever can render, such perfect obedience? Who, that looks into his own heart, and considers his ways, and counts up his many and grievous faults, can do aught else than fall down before God, and exclaim, "If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss; O Lord, who may abide it?" No! we all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. It is when we contemplate our own lives, yes, even our best endeavours to serve God, that we feel most deeply our need of a Saviour. And to speak of any obedience of our own as the sole ground of our acceptance with God, would be merely to drive us to despair. But while we regard such per-

[1] *Lev.* xviii. 5. See also Rom. x. 5, and Gal. iii. 12.

fect obedience, as could *claim any reward* at God's hands, as a simple impossibility on the part of man, it must be evident that that imperfect obedience which is required as a *condition* of our acceptance with God can be nothing else than a positive necessity, *because God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and He cannot look on iniquity*[m]*:"* He can never admit into His presence those that are *not "meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:" and as our characters here determine our characters hereafter; as no change can pass on us after death, (except that the good or evil of our characters will be drawn out unto the perfection of holiness or to the consummation of iniquity); as we must be throughout eternity such as we have become in time,—hence it follows by necessity that the love, and obedience, and holiness which are requisite to fit us for God's presence in heaven, and which shall be perfected in us in another life, must have their beginning here, and be first formed in us in this life. The existence of these in us must be a necessary condition of our acceptance with God: for if we have not these here, if in this life we are only wicked, we must be for ever wicked hereafter, and so be wholly unfit to stand before the Lord.

To imagine that God will create in us hereafter that character and those good dispositions which we have not here in this life, and do not care to have, is only a vain thought. "Where the tree falleth, there it shall be[n]." What death leaves us, eternity shall find us. What we are when we close our eyes on all things of

[m] Hab. i. 13. [n] Eccles. xi. 3.

time, and lay us down and die, the same shall we remain, be we holy or be we unholy, for ever and for ever. Just as it is said, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still[o]." Here, in this life, must be formed in us that *love*, wanting which we are only "Anathema Maranatha[p]," that is, accursed when the Lord cometh; that *obedience*, which is the effect of love[q]; that *holiness*, "without which no man shall see the Lord[r]:" for except these be acquired now, they can never be acquired at all; and these are *necessary conditions* of our salvation.

Let it be added, that we speak of these (love, obedience, holiness) as necessary, inasmuch as these are proofs of the inclination of the heart and will. That which, in strictness, is necessary to our acceptableness with God, that which is *essential*, is *the conversion of the heart and will to God.* But as the proofs of such conversion lie ordinarily in the evidence which our lives and characters afford, that is, in our love, obedience, holiness, (a tree being discerned by its fruits,) therefore we speak of these as "necessary." Let it ever be remembered, however, for what this conversion of the heart is necessary: not to *win* for us an inheritance in heaven,—that could be done by nothing else than the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour,—but to make us *meet to be partakers* of that inheritance when it has been won, to render us *fit* to dwell in

[o] Rev. xxii. 11.
[p] 1 Cor. xvi. 22.
[q] *John xiv. 15* and 23.
[r] Heb. xii. 14.

God's presence in heaven. The "wedding garment" in the parable will aptly illustrate this truth*. No "garment" was needed to procure them, that were found in the "highways," an *invitation* to the wedding; the invitation was a simple act of grace on the part of the king; but the garment was necessary to them in order that they might *remain* and sit as *acceptable* guests at the marriage supper.

* Matt. xxii. 11.

CHAPTER IV.

HOLY BAPTISM.

CHRIST being the root whence we derive all spiritual life and blessing[t], and since the one great aim of the soul's life must be to be joined unto Christ and to abide in Him for ever, the question follows, "How and when is our union with our Lord effected?" We answer, "In our spiritual birth." Our Lord hath said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God[u]."

There are two births: 1. our natural birth; 2. our spiritual birth. By our natural birth we are joined to and descended from Adam; in our spiritual birth we are united to Christ. This spiritual birth takes place at our Baptism: thus we are taught in the Catechism that at our Baptism we were "made members of Christ," and that the "inward and spiritual grace" of Baptism is "a *new birth* unto righteousness;" thus, too, in the Baptismal Service, before the child is baptized, we pray that God will "give His Holy Spirit to the infant that he may be *born again:*" and immediately after the Baptism we acknowledge our belief in the child's regeneration, or new birth, and humbly thank God for that mercy vouchsafed, saying, "We yield Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it *hath pleased Thee to regenerate* this infant with Thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for Thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into Thy Holy Church."

[t] *John* xv. 1—6. [u] Ibid. iii. 3.

The texts from which we learn that regeneration, or the new birth, does take place in our Baptism are the following: John iii. 5; Titus iii. 5; Gal. iii. 27; 1 Cor. xii. 13; Rom. vi. 3, 4; Col. ii. 12; Acts xxii. 16, ii. 38.

By that regeneration, or new birth, which takes place at Baptism we understand simply the being *grafted into Christ*, the being made Christ's *members*, and the being adopted into God's family. The which state of blessing does not necessarily imply our continuance in grace, or our final perseverance, or our future salvation. By being made "members of Christ" we become indeed God's children, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven: but a son may prove himself a prodigal; a child may be disinherited for his obstinate persistence in ill-doing; a branch once united to the parent stem may be broken off and withered, and be cast away[v].

The effect which should take place, and which God intends should take place upon our regeneration, is an entire change of our heart and disposition. The receiving the light of the Holy Spirit ought to work such a change in us, and ought to make us really new creatures. And sometimes the new birth is spoken of as if it had actually worked that intended change[w]. But we are to remember that this happy result does not follow in all, or even in many cases; in *some*[x] per-

[v] John xv. 6; Rom. xi. 21, 22; Heb. vi. 4—6.

[w] 1 John iii. 9, v. 4, 18.

[x] Or it may be more correctly said perhaps, that that yielding of the will and of the heart and affections to God which is presently spoken of as conversion, and which in most instances takes place at some later time of life, does in *these* cases commence with the earliest years and with the first opening of the young child's mind.

haps it does, by God's mercy, but not in many. For there remains even in them that are regenerated a hardness of heart, a disposition to sin, an infirmity of will; and therefore is there necessary in them a second change before the designs of God's providence towards them can be fulfilled. This second change we call *conversion:* when to the change before effected in their outward condition (they from being children of wrath having in Baptism become children of grace) is added a change in their inward state also; their will, the inclination and disposition of their heart, is changed; with their whole heart and mind they turn away from sinful things, they embrace God's offered mercies, and give themselves with earnestness and sincerity to God's service.

Regeneration and conversion are not to be confounded, or regarded as one and the selfsame thing. They are two distinct and separate processes.

Regeneration is God's sole act, wherein of His free grace, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, upon our promised faith and repentance, He grafts us into Christ, joins us to Christ, makes us Christ's members.

Conversion is (as we may in some sense say) a joint work of God and of ourselves; it is God "working in us both to will and to do[y];" and it is on our part a sensible yielding of ourselves to the influence of God's grace, a laying hold of and choosing as our lot and portion God's mercy, a closing with the Divine offers, a working out our own salvation[z], a making our calling and election sure[a]: it is a turning of ourselves[b], our

[y] *Phil. ii. 13.* [z] Ib. ii. 12. [a] 2 Pet. i. 10. [b] Ezek. xviii. 31, 32.

whole heart and mind, to God; whereby we become indeed new creatures[c], old things, old wishes, desires, inclinations gradually pass away; our life becomes a new one; having been servants of sin, we become servants of righteousness[d]; we go from strength to strength; and at length, if we persevere, become numbered with God's saints in glory everlasting.

As the result of our regeneration, or grafting into Christ, is our justification[e], so this gradual yielding of our hearts and wills to God, which we call conversion, and which is effected in us by God's Holy Spirit, issues out into our sanctification.

But here, let these terms 'justification' and 'sanctification' be explained.

First, of 'justification,' or being 'justified.' Let us begin with the word 'just.' This is easy to understand. A man who is 'just' in the sight of God, is one who is absolutely righteous, actually without sin, perfectly obedient to all God's law. He is such a man, in fact, as is not to be found in all the world; since "there is none righteous; no, not one[f]." Then, secondly, to 'justify' is *to treat us, who are really sinners, as if we were just or righteous.* And 'justification' is that merciful act of God whereby He receives us sinners back into His favour, whereby He regards us, who are positively sinful, as if we were holy and good; whereby He looks upon us, who are in truth unclean, as if we were indeed clean; whereby He pardons all our sins, and frailties, and imperfections, and

[c] 2 Cor. v. 17.
[d] Rom. vi. 19.
[e] 1 Cor. vi. 11.
[f] Rom. iii. 10.

regards us as if we were the exact contrary of what we are; whereby He restores us, who are by nature rebels, to those privileges of sonship for which His divine wisdom originally created us. This is 'justification.' And this miracle of love and mercy God shews forth in us for the sake of Jesus Christ. Because Christ has fulfilled the law of righteousness for us, and because He has borne the penalty due to sin, God justifies us. *For Christ's sake God treats us, who are actually sinners, as if we were just and holy.* And this work of justification is a work done in each individual soul at the time of its Baptism. We, each one of us, do obtain our part and share in the great work of Christ in that happy hour of our regeneration; when, being grafted by the Holy Ghost into Christ, we become God's children, and are made heirs of eternal life[g].

And secondly, of 'sanctification:' this is our being *made* by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit *really holy*—holy in heart, and character, and disposition, and so fit to enter upon our inheritance in heaven. And this sanctification (we may observe) follows naturally after justification. God does not only forgive and blot out the past, and re-instate us in His grace and favour, and restore us to our lost sonship, and then leave us to our own unaided efforts, but having begun the good work in us, He performs it until the day of Jesus Christ[h]; He gives us Divine strength whereby we may be enabled to walk worthy of our vocation, and shew ourselves obedient children fitted for a place in God's eternal kingdom; as it is said, "Because ye

[g] Titus iii. 5—7. [h] Phil. i. 6.

are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts[1]."

Respecting the doctrine of 'regeneration in Baptism,' it is necessary to hold this both for our *comfort* and for our *warning*. For our comfort, since we are hereby assured of God's favour towards us, of which we might otherwise have no positive or distinct assurance; and for our warning, since if we have once received the grace of God, we must answer for our use of that grace at the Day of Judgment.

Notice here, too, the use and value of Sacraments. They are outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace; signs which our Lord gave and ordained for our comfort and assurance. They are the means whereby we receive that grace, channels whereby that grace is conveyed to us; and they are a pledge and sign to assure us that we really have been partakers of such grace. Without such outward signs we might be in doubt whether we had ever received God's grace or not. But since our Lord has attached to the right use of these Sacraments certain spiritual gifts and blessings,—since they were appointed for the very purpose of imparting grace to the souls of the faithful, the receiving these Sacraments is an assurance to our hearts of God's goodness and favour towards us, and in the reception of these our doubts and fears are put to rest.

Let it be here called to mind what is the outward part in Baptism; it is *water* and *the form of words*,—water, wherein the person is baptized in the name of

[1] Gal. iv. 6.

the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And see in this washing in pure water how apt a sign is given of that cleansing from all sin, which happens to us at our baptism[j]. See also in the plunging beneath the wave and in the coming up again from beneath the water, (for this was the ancient custom, to dip beneath the water,) a fitting emblem of that death unto sin and that new birth unto righteousness which is the inward and spiritual grace of Baptism.

In our new birth in Baptism, then, we were united unto Christ our spiritual Head; we became members of that Body (the Church) of which Christ is the Head[k].

And notice now the importance and absolute necessity of Baptism. Our Lord's command was, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost[l]." And in every instance recorded in the Acts of the Apostles of persons being converted to the Christian faith, we find that the first duty enjoined upon them was invariably the receiving the baptismal rite,—their first step was always *to be baptized*[m]. And so we confess in the Catechism that Baptism is "generally necessary to salvation."

As regards the baptizing of *infants*, we believe this to have been the custom from the earliest times. As God was pleased to bring Jewish children into cove-

j Acts xxii. 16.

k Ephes. i. 22, 23, v. 30; Col. i. 18; 1 Cor. vi. 15, xii. 27.

l Matt. xxviii. 19.

m See Acts ii. 38, 41, viii. 12, 38, ix. 18, x. 47, 48, xvi. 15, 33, *xviii. 8, xix. 5.*

nant with Himself at the age of eight days[n], so, we doubt not, it is pleasing to Him to receive Christian children in their infancy and to embrace them in the arms of His mercy. God will not, we may well suppose, do less for Christian children than He was wont to do for the children of the people of Israel. It is sometimes argued that there is no plain, positive, direct command in Holy Scripture enjoining us to bring infants to holy Baptism. No! perhaps there is not any such command. And why? Because none such was required. When the earliest Christians, who were Jewish converts, brought their children to be received into God's family through the waters of Baptism, they were only doing what they had ever been accustomed to do under the old law, which ordered *infants* to be brought into covenant with God by circumcision. The very silence, indeed, of Scripture on the subject is a proof that the baptizing of infants was the custom of the Apostles in the Christian Church, as the circumcising of infants had been the custom in the Jewish Church. Had any change taken place in respect to the age at which persons might be admitted into covenant with God, some notice of such change must have been given, and some new rule have been *laid down* by the Apostles. The absence of any such rule is proof enough that no change at all was contemplated.

If it be asked, 'How can infants be capable of receiving God's grace?' It may at once be answered, 'That if infants can be liable to God's anger (as they most surely can, since they are born in sin and are

[n] Gen. xvii. 12.

children of wrath[o]) they may certainly become partakers of God's mercy.'

That our Blessed Saviour was baptized at the age of thirty is no argument against infant baptism. Our Lord's baptism does not bear upon the question in any way whatever. Baptism, as a Christian Sacrament and as a means of grace, had not then been instituted.

Baptism, as then used among the Jews, was merely an outward ceremony whereby the necessity of inward purification was acknowledged, and the desire for such purification expressed. This outward ceremony, thus familiarized to the minds of the people, Christ was pleased to take, (and where could a more fitting one be found?) and to raise it, just before His ascension into heaven, to the dignity of a Christian sacrament, appointing it to be used in the place of circumcision. The very change from the bloody rite of circumcision to the milder ceremony of baptizing aptly setting forth the unspeakably great change which was now about to take place, in the substitution of the merciful covenant of the Gospel of peace for the sternness and severity of the Law of Moses. But at the time of our Lord's baptism this change had not taken place. At that time the law of Moses was still in force; and the rite in which God's people were received into covenant with Him was not baptism but circumcision, which circumcision Christ duly received at the age of eight days[p]. To ground any argument, therefore, against infant baptism on the fact of our Lord having been

[o] *Ps. li. 5*; Eph. ii. 3. [p] Luke ii. 21.

baptized when he was thirty years of age, must be altogether erroneous[q].

[q] In Christian Baptism, be it remembered, we are grafted into Christ's Body, as St. Paul declares, (1 Cor. xii. 13,) "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body:" but there could not have been any baptism into Christ's Body before our Lord's ascension, since that Body had not then any being: not till after Christ's ascension and upon the descent of the Holy Ghost did the Church (which is Christ's Body) begin to exist. Our Saviour during His life on earth speaks of the Church as *future*, "On this rock I *will* build My Church," (Matt. xvi. 18). And it was not till after the ascension of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, that the Church's life began, or that it could be said, "The Lord added unto the Church daily such as should be saved." Acts ii. 47.

CHAPTER V.

THE BAPTISMAL VOW: REPENTANCE.

In our infancy, then, when we were baptized, we were joined unto Christ our spiritual Head; and at that time we, as was most fitting that we should do, pledged ourselves (our god-parents speaking on our behalf) to God's service. Our god-parents then promised in our name three things, which may be shortly summed up under the three heads, Repentance, Faith, Obedience.

First they promised, that we should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh.

Notice first, and learn from the following passages of Scripture the real existence and the personality of Satan: Gen. iii. 1; 1 Chron. xxi. 1; Job i. 6; Matt. iv. 1—10; Mark iv. 15; Luke xxii. 3; Acts v. 3; James iv. 7; 1 Pet. v. 8; 1 John iii. 8; Matt. viii. 28—33; Mark ix. 17—27.

It is necessary for us to know that Satan is a real person, in order that we may constantly remember that we have a real, positive enemy to fight against. St. Paul says, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood[r];" not against any man in a visible body, "but against spiritual wickedness in high places," that is, against wicked spirits, whom we cannot see with our eyes, but who yet are ever near us, having their place in the air around us. How often are persons suddenly

[r] Eph. vi. 12.

assailed with temptation, they know not how! Wicked thoughts are put into their minds; wicked desires are presented to them; sinful imaginations are suggested to them. These things come from Satan. Some sins are in a peculiar sense works of the devil, such as tempting others to commit sin, sneering at and ridiculing what is good, persecuting in any way those who are trying to lead holy and Christian lives, and endeavouring to make them as bad as ourselves; or such again, as pride, lying, blasphemy, disobedience, and evil tempers, which may end in murder.

In some sense all sins are works of the devil, as St. John says in his Epistle, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning[s]:" but the sins just mentioned do spring especially from the temptations of the Evil One,—from that Evil One, to be delivered from whose power we pray when we say, as we do in the Lord's Prayer, "Deliver us from evil." See how St. Paul teaches us to withstand this spiritual enemy, Ephes. vi. 10—18; see too St. Peter's words, 1 Pet. v. 8; and St. James's, James iv. 7.

Secondly, mark how Holy Scripture speaks of that world which, with its pomps and vanity, we promise to renounce: 1 John ii. 15—17; James iv. 4; Rom. xii. 2; Matt. xiii. 22.

"The things which are seen are temporal[t]," says St. Paul. The world consists partly in these temporal, visible things, which are all around us; things which belong to time, not to eternity; to this life, not to the next; "things on the earth[u]" on which we are con-

[s] 1 John iii. 8. [t] 2 Cor. iv. 18. [u] Col. iii. 2.

stantly tempted to set our affections, rather than on those unseen eternal things which are "above." This "world" with its "pomps" (that is, things which make a great outward show) and "vanity" (that is, things which do not last, which soon pass away, and are lost to us for ever; or things which are unprofitable, which are productive of no real good, things which mislead, and deceive, and disappoint us) we are to renounce.

We cannot choose out certain things, and assert positively that all these are among the pomps and vanity of this wicked world which *every* Christian must equally avoid, if he would be saved; because there are many things in this world which, while they may be safely and properly used by some persons, would prove to others dangerous in the extreme, injurious to their Christian character, and hurtful to their souls.

For instance, if a woman in a very humble rank of life were to deck herself out in a dress of silk, or if a man in an inferior station were to drive about in a very handsome carriage, this in their cases would be pomp; whereas these very self-same things might be done innocently by persons in a different position.

It can only be said generally, that anything which is unfitted to and unbecoming in that station of life unto which it has pleased God to call us; anything which will be likely to foster in us a spirit of pride, or self-conceit, or vain-glory; anything which will destroy in us that Christian humility, that "meek and *quiet spirit* which is in the sight of God of great

price[x]," must be reckoned among those pomps of this world which a servant of God must renounce.

And let it be observed here with respect to *different stations* in life; that it is wrong to regard such differences as some necessary *evil* connected with man's fallen state in this life, an evil which shall be corrected and cease to exist in the kingdom of heaven. The tyranny, the selfishness, the oppression, the cruelty, the pride, which too often spring out of these differences through man's corruption and perversity; the grinding covetousness of the rich, the idle, intemperate, and improvident habits of the poor, which produce the bitterness of want,—these all are miserable evils indeed; but the differences in rank and station themselves are not an evil, since these are of God's own appointment, and are intended to foster such Christian qualities as humility and obedience, charity and self-denial.

Nor is this difference of rank and position confined to this world only; a like difference exists in all God's universe: "There is one glory of the sun, and another" and a lesser "glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory[y]." And yet all are unspeakably glorious! A like distinction exists around God's seat in heaven; there are angels and archangels, there are "thrones" and "dominions," there are "principalities" and "powers[z]." These happy spirits are diverse in their ranks and orders, but yet all perfect in their bliss. A like difference shall exist hereafter among the com-

[x] 1 Pet. iii. 4. [y] 1 Cor. xv. 41. [z] Col. i. 16.

panies of the blessed: when for some it is prepared to sit on God's right hand and on His left; for some to approach the nearer to that glorious presence where are pleasures for evermore; for some to be adorned with a more "radiant coronet, all gemmed with pure and living light;" for others a lesser share of glory. But for all, happiness; for all, though they thus differ, happiness infinite, past understanding, eternal. It is true beyond all questioning, that men's positions hereafter will be widely altered. The distinctions arising from wealth, or noble birth, or powers of mind, or strength of body, will no longer exist. "There are last" now "which shall be first" hereafter; "and there are first" in this life "which shall be last[a]" in the life to come. But yet these very words of Christ Himself, this very mention of some being "first" hereafter, and some "last," must prove that there will be differences in the future life. And is not this the reason why envy, jealousy, covetousness, and the like miserable tempers are to be so carefully checked within ourselves? It is not only because they must render us unhappy, wretched, and discontented in this life; but (which is of far greater importance) because such tempers cherished here, and so becoming part of our characters hereafter, tempers *arising out of the sight of our fellow men's superior advantages*, must render us unfit to enjoy the holy peace, and love, and calm content of heaven.

Or, again, (to return to our subject,) with regard to the question, 'How far may we innocently and with-

[a] Luke xiii. 30.

out fear join in the pleasures and amusements (which in some sense may be reckoned among the vanities) of the world?' No answer can be given which will equally well apply to all persons. It can only again be said generally, that anything which draws away our hearts from God; anything which makes us less able to pray and less willing to seek God's presence; anything which unduly hinders the discharge of our known and acknowledged duties and renders us less active in God's service, must be considered dangerous and unfitted for a Christian. To learn what really hurts our souls, and in what we may lawfully and innocently indulge ourselves, is a part of that Christian watchfulness in which each individual is bound to exercise himself.

But the "world" means more than "things temporal," "things on the earth" around us. The world, our world, consists too in all those wicked, ungodly, irreligious people whom we meet, with whom we are mixed up in the daily intercourse of this life, and whose bad examples may lead us astray. One great danger which besets all Christians, especially young Christians, arises from the evil influence of these worldly people. We are tempted to do as other people do; we are afraid of appearing singular, and different from other people; we fear the ridicule and taunts to which we may be subjected if we act up strictly to what we consider right; it is easier to follow the way of the world than to take our own line, the line which Holy Scripture perhaps points out, and which our own conscience approves. It is very hard to be laughed at, and looked down upon,

and thought poor and mean-spirited, or to be misunderstood by those whom we love, because we do not rule our conduct by the fashion of the world; because we dress perhaps more simply, or because we refuse to join in gaieties and amusements in which other people will indulge, or because we are stricter in the choice of our friends and companions, or are more careful in our observance of the Lord's Day, or are humbler, less selfish, and of a more forgiving spirit than others. But we are to remember that every soldier of Jesus Christ is called upon to "endure hardness[b]." This very hardness may be that "cross" which we must bear after Christ if we would be counted worthy of Him[c]. We remember, too, how Christ has said, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven[d]." And in our case, very often, this confessing or denying Christ may consist in our either disregarding or our complying with the ways and opinions of this wicked world, and thus either abiding by or neglecting Christ's rule of holiness. We know, moreover, that we are forbidden to "follow a multitude to do evil[e]:" we are not to follow the example of other persons if these be ungodly: and the only rule or standard by which we may safely direct and judge our lives and conduct is the will of God declared to us in Holy Scripture.

Thirdly, we are to renounce the sinful lusts of the

[b] 2 Tim. ii. 3. [c] Matt. x. 38.
[d] *Matt. x. 32.* [e] Exod. xxiii. 2.

flesh, that is, the sinful desires or wishes to which we are prompted through our bodily appetites and inclinations. The flesh is the enemy *within* us. While the devil and the world are from *without*, our fleshly lusts and appetites are traitors *within*, which war against the soul, and over which we have to keep the strictest watch. To keep our bodies under, to bring our unruly appetites into subjection, to restrain our foolish, sinful, self-indulgent inclinations, to be severe with ourselves, self-denying, moderate in all things, sober, chaste, "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit," to keep watch over our wandering eyes, over our unruly tongues, over our angry tempers, to repress the pride, and self-conceit, and haughtiness of spirit, and disobedience to which we are all too prone,—in all this consists the life-long struggle which Christians must maintain. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other[f]." To subdue the flesh and to cherish the holy influences which the Spirit of God would impart to our spirits, is the great work for which we live[g]. It matters not to enlarge upon the works of the flesh, they are plainly and unmistakeably declared to us[h], and the sentence is evidently pronounced, "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Only observe here how St. Paul classes together sins about which men often think very differently, and how he pronounces the same sentence against them all. It is not only of them who are guilty of murder and drunkenness and such heinous offences against God's

[f] Gal. v. 17. [g] Rom. viii. 5—9. [h] Gal. v. 19—21.

law, that the Apostle declares that they who do such things shall be banished for ever from God's presence hereafter, but of them also who give way to hatred and wrath and strife,—sins of which men think but little, of which they speak lightly, regarding them as only natural infirmities, and hardly believing, perhaps, that such trifling sins (as they would call them) can affect their soul's salvation. And yet upon one and all of these sins of the flesh the same sentence of eternal woe is equally pronounced: even as St. James says, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all[1]." We who have become God's children and heirs of His glorious kingdom in heaven are to renounce these sinful lusts of the flesh, on pain of forfeiting our sonship and losing the promised inheritance for all eternity.

[1] James ii. 10.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BAPTISMAL VOW: FAITH.

In the second place, we promise to believe all the articles of the Christian faith. These articles, or different parts, of the Christian faith we find summed up in the three Creeds.

1. The Apostles' Creed; so called, not probably from its having been actually written or drawn up by the Apostles themselves, but simply from its containing those points of doctrine which from the earliest apostolic times were ever enforced as necessary to be believed. 2. The Nicene Creed, in which are embodied those opinions which at the great Council of Nicæa (held A.D. 325) were declared to be the truth and the teaching of the Church. 3. The Athanasian Creed, so named after the eminent defender of the faith, St. Athanasius.

To the use of this last-mentioned (Athanasian) Creed, there are sometimes objections made. Persons imagine it to be uncharitable in its declarations. This Creed commences thus: "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." And it concludes with these words: "This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved." These declarations are objected to, as being harsh and uncharitable. But surely this is a mistaken notion. The words of the Creed are in fact little else

than the words of our Lord Himself. The Creed says, Except a man believe the Catholic faith "he cannot be saved," and "shall perish everlastingly:" Christ says, "He that believeth not shall be damned[j]." The Church, then, in her statement merely repeats our Lord's own declaration. There can be nothing uncharitable in this. The words are simply used as a grave warning, solemnly reminding all members of the Church of what the fatal consequences to their own souls must be if they renounce the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. (That this Creed does set forth the true doctrines of the Christian faith, and that there is nothing declared in it which does not rest on the sure warrant of Holy Scripture, may be most evidently proved. No objection, therefore, can be safely grounded upon the supposition that it is one thing to warn men, as our Saviour does, of the danger of disbelieving *the truth*, and another and a very different thing to denounce men's rejection of *the Church's statement and exposition of that truth*. The Church in this Creed only warns men of the necessity of believing, on peril of their soul's salvation, those things which may be most surely and certainly proved from Holy Scripture.) The words in this Creed to which persons object are not intended as a general sentence passed upon all unbelievers without exception; they are, let it be said again, solemn words of warning addressed to *members of the Church*, telling them, what St. Paul also has already declared in words of terrible significancy, in that passage where he speaks of men abandoning

[j] Mark xvi. 16.

the faith, that "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame[k]." And certainly, in the giving such warning there is neither harshness nor uncharity, but rather a most true love and tenderness. *Men require such warning.* There is ever a tendency in some men's minds to underrate the value and importance of holding fast the truth and "the form of sound words[l]." Never more so than in these present days! Men seem now to forget that there is such a thing as "the faith once delivered to the saints[m]." They forget that the truth does exist, fixed and unchangeable as God Himself. They will fondly imagine *that* to be truth which they *believe* to be the truth. They will conceive that it matters little *what* they do believe, so only that they are *sincere* in their belief, and are fully persuaded in their minds. For such persons the warning is most surely necessary, then, that the truth does certainly exist, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,—that there are "principles of the doctrine of Christ[n]" which men are called on to believe; and that Christ Himself, Christ the fountain of all love and tenderness and mercy, Christ has declared, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

The first great truth contained in the Creeds is the

[k] Heb. vi. 4—6. [l] 2 Tim. i. 13. [m] Jude 3. [n] Heb. vi. 1.

doctrine of the Holy Trinity,—that there is one God, and that in this one Godhead there are three Persons —the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Observe, we do not declare or believe that these three great Persons are one *Person*. That would be a contradiction. But we affirm and believe that the three holy Persons are one God. They are one in *substance*. By substance we understand that which God *is*, that which "forms the Divine essence or being." God the Son and God the Holy Ghost are what God the Father is. "Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. In this Trinity none is afore or after other; none is greater or less than another. But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal[o]." This is one great mystery

[o] "As there is a number in the Trinity, by which the Persons are neither more nor less than three; so there is also an order, by which, of these Persons, the Father is the first, the Son the second, and the Holy Ghost the third. Nor is this order arbitrary or external, but internal and necessary, by virtue of a subordination of the second unto the first, and of the third unto the first and second. The Godhead was communicated from the Father to the Son, not from the Son unto the Father; though therefore this were done from all eternity, and so there can be no priority of time, yet there must be acknowledged a priority of order, by which the Father, not the Son, is first, and the Son, not the Father, second. Again, the same Godhead was communicated by the Father and the Son unto the Holy Ghost, not by the Holy Ghost to the Father or the Son; though therefore this was also done from all eternity, and therefore can admit of no priority in reference to time; yet that of order must be here observed; so that the Spirit receiving the Godhead from the Father, who is the first Person, cannot be the first; receiving the same from the Son, who is the second, cannot be the second; but being from the first and second must be of the three the third."—*Pearson on the Creed.*

of the Christian faith, a mystery which we cannot fully understand indeed, but which we are called upon to accept and believe because Holy Scripture teaches it plainly.

Observe, that our not understanding a thing is no sufficient argument against its truth, or against our accepting and believing it. Facts around us in this life will abundantly prove thus much. For instance, to a child the simplest processes in nature may be unintelligible;—the growth of plants from seed, the wonderful effects of heat and cold, the motions of the earth, these all may be beyond its power of understanding. Are these things therefore less true and certain? Or will the child give less credit to their being true because it cannot comprehend them? Or again, to the minds of the ignorant and less perfectly instructed the commonest elements of science will be hidden and unfathomable secrets. But will the facts, then, of chemistry or electricity, or the laws of gravitation, things perfectly intelligible to the more highly cultivated intellects, will these be less true because they are beyond the understanding of the ignorant? Or, would the ignorant themselves reject things which are plain through their *effects*, because they cannot fathom the *causes* which produce them? In like manner we may ask, Are the mysteries of God's kingdom to be rejected and disbelieved because the feeble intellect of man cannot grasp and understand them? No! We may not be able to comprehend the hidden things of God, things which may pass man's understanding; but we may believe them none the less

confidently with a simple unhesitating faith. It need only concern us to enquire whether these things are or are not revealed in Holy Scripture; if they are there declared to us, we may receive them without a moment's doubting or suspicion.

As regards this great mystery of the Holy Trinity, we find it stated clearly and unmistakeably in Holy Scripture. Thus, that God is one is declared in Deut. vi. 4, and repeated Mark xii. 29. That in this one Godhead there are three Persons, is evident from Matt. iii. 16. (Here the three great Persons are present together, God the Father in the Voice which said, "This is My beloved Son;" God the Son in fashion as a man being baptized; God the Holy Ghost "descending like a dove.") Again from St. Matt. xxviii. 19, and from 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

That these three holy Persons are separate and distinct in person, although they are one in substance, is certain because *we can affirm something about each of them which we may not and cannot affirm of the others.* Thus, of God the Father we can say, that He is made of none, neither created, *nor* begotten, *nor* proceeding; of God the Son we can say, that He is not made, nor created, nor proceeding, but *He is begotten*[o]; of God the Holy Ghost we can say, that He is not made, nor created, nor begotten, *but proceeding*[p].

Notice also in John xiv. 26, xv. 26, that the Holy Ghost is sent, by the Father, in the name of the Son (in the first passage), and by the Son from the Father (in the second passage): thus is there one

[o] *John i.* 14, 18, iii. 16. [p] Ibid. xv. 26.

Person *sent*, one *from* whom He is sent, one *by* whom He is sent. These then, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are three Persons, but their substance, their Godhead is one: the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.

That the Son is God we learn from John i. 1, 14, x. 30; Phil. ii. 6; Tit. ii. 13; John xx. 31; Rev. i. 8, 11, 17, 18, xxii. 13.

Remember here, that when our Lord says, "My Father is *greater* than I[q];" or when in another passage He declares, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father[r],"—when our Lord uses these words, He speaks not then with reference to His Godhead, but only with reference to His manhood. He speaks not of Himself then as being God, but only as being man. And so we confess in the Athanasian Creed, that "Christ is equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood."

The Godhead of the Holy Ghost we prove from Acts v. 3, 4; Ps. lxviii. 18; Eph. iv. 30; Matt. xii. 31, 32; 2 Cor. iii. 17; 1 Cor. ii. 10—13.

These three great Persons, then, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are each God and Lord; yet they are not three Gods, but one God; not three Lords, but one Lord; as it is declared, "The Lord our God is one Lord[s]."

Of these three great Persons we believe, 1. Of the Father, that He is the Maker and Creator of all things

[q] John xiv. 28. [r] Mark xiii. 32. [s] Ib. xii. 29.

in heaven and earth; of all things visible, things which we see around us in the world and in the heavens above; and also of things invisible, such as the unseen spirits, those good and evil angels, some of whom are God's ministers, watching over them who shall be heirs of salvation[t],—guardian angels of Christ's little ones, always beholding the face of the Father which is in heaven[u]; others, fallen rebellious spirits, going to and fro in the earth[v], whose miserable work it is to tempt and deceive the children of men during this present life, and at the last to be their accusers before the judgment-seat of God. Of God the Father we also believe, as regards the redemption of mankind, that He so truly and really loved the world[w], that He gave His only-begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins[x]. On account of His great love wherewith He loved our ruined race, and for our redemption, the Father could endure to behold the sufferings of His only Son; He could put Him to grief, He could see of the travail of His soul[y], He could hear His voice in the hour of death crying in a mysterious agony, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This could God the Father suffer for man's salvation, and in this was manifested His surpassing love toward us[z].

2. Of the Son we believe that He, being in the form of God, being God blessed for ever, did yet humble Himself to be born of the Virgin Mary[a], and to be made in the likeness of men; and that as a man He

[t] Heb. i. 14. [u] Matt. xviii. 10. [v] Job i. 7. [w] John iii. 16.
[x] 1 John iv. 10. [y] Isa. liii. 10, 11. [z] 1 John iv. 9.
[a] *Luke i. 31—35.*

led a life of poverty and humiliation[b], being "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief[c];" and did at last bear our sins, and the punishment due to those sins, which was death; giving up His life upon the cross, dying in our stead, that He might redeem us from death; enduring the unspeakable shame and agony of the cross, that we might receive the glories of God's kingdom and be exalted to everlasting life. We believe, too, that after His death upon the cross, while His sacred body was resting in the grave, His soul (for Christ was a "perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting") departed unto paradise[d], and was there until the third day; upon which day[e] Christ rose again from the dead; and after having shewn Himself alive, being seen of the disciples forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God[f], did ascend triumphantly into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God the Father, to be there our Mediator and Intercessor[g], until that day when He shall once more come in power and great glory, and all the holy angels with Him, to judge both the quick and the dead, and to render to every man according to His works[h]. This we believe of God the Son.

3. Of God the Holy Ghost we believe, that He is the Lord and Giver of life; that He is God co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and God the Son;

[b] Matt. viii. 20; Luke viii. 3; Matt. xvii. 27; Luke vii. 44. [c] Isa. liii. 3. [d] Luke xxiii. 43. [e] 1 Cor. xv. 4. [f] Acts i. 3, 9. [g] Rom. viii. 34; 1 Pet. iii. 22; Heb. i. 3. [h] 2 Tim. iv. 1; Acts x. 42; Matt. xxv. 31, xvi. 27.

that through Him, and through His divine working, our souls receive all spiritual life, and grace, and strength. That as it is His first work in our baptism[i] to graft us into Christ, in Whom is life[k], so also is it His divine work continually to preserve that holy union between Christ and us, to foster, strengthen, and develope in us that spiritual life which we have received from Christ our Head. As Christ declares Himself to be the Vine[l], we being the branches, so is the Holy Spirit that life-giving sap which flows through all the sacred tree, and gives to every branch its vigour, strength, and fruitfulness. The Holy Ghost sanctifies Christ's members day by day. He sanctifieth all the elect people of God.

Observe on that word "elect," it may bear two meanings. It may refer, in its widest application, to all those persons who in their baptism are elected to be members of Christ and children of God; in which case, when we say that the Holy Ghost sanctifieth, or makes holy, all the elect people of God, we do not mean to assert that all baptized persons are indeed sanctified more and more throughout their lives by the Holy Ghost, but only that those among the baptized *who are holy* are made so by no power or natural strength of their own, but only by the divine influence of the Holy Ghost, who "worketh in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure[m]."

Secondly, the word "elect" may refer, in a more confined sense, to the elect of the elect; to those few

[i] 1 Cor. xii. 13.
[k] John i. 4.
[l] John xv. 1.
[m] Phil. ii. 13.

(out of the vast number who were once elected in their baptism to Gospel privileges) who have made their "calling and election sure;" to the "few chosen" ones out of the "many called[n]." And of these it is declared, that they, yielding themselves to the influences of the Holy Spirit, and not having received the grace of God in vain, are daily sanctified more and more; they are "strengthened with might in the inner man[o]," they grow in grace, they become "holy in all manner of conversation[p]," and at last are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light[q]."

The word "elect" will naturally lead us to that doctrine of "election" which is so great a difficulty to some persons' minds.

The simplest, and at the same time a perfectly scriptural way of explaining the doctrine of election, is this: We may believe that the election spoken of in Holy Scripture is an election *not to final salvation*, but to what is called in the Catechism "a state of salvation,"—a state wherein we are made partakers of the benefits of Christ's precious sacrifice, and wherein we *may* attain, if we *will* attain, unto eternal life. It is an election to a participation in the privileges and blessings of the Gospel dispensation, which may lead to our final salvation, or not, according to the use we make of these inestimable benefits. This is not difficult to understand. We can see in the world around us that some persons are elected unto Christianity; they are born of Christian parents, and of necessity,

[n] Matt. xxii. 14. [o] Eph. iii. 16. [p] 1 Pet. i. 15. [q] Col. i. 12.

and without any choice on their own parts, they become Christians and sharers in the Gospel covenant; others are born of heathen parents, and by a like necessity (as far as we can see) are not elected to, but are shut out from, Christian privileges. But this election does not absolutely and positively *decide*, however much it may *influence*, their future state in eternity; because, as on the one hand, many persons born to be Christians will certainly not inherit the kingdom of heaven; so, on the other hand, we may charitably hope (and there is nothing in Scripture to forbid the hope) that some persons, born into the darkness of heathenism, will yet be saved hereafter by being made partakers of the benefits of Christ's death in some manner and by some means not as yet revealed to us. This perhaps is the best way of explaining the doctrine of election.

But as some persons are not contented with this, and as some will press the matter farther, and imagine that an election unto final salvation *is* spoken of in Holy Scripture, and since from this opinion they often draw the most dangerous conclusions, it may be well to shew further that the doctrine of an election to final salvation is not inconsistent with the free offers of salvation to all men held out in so many passages of Holy Scripture, and does not necessarily lead to the extreme views which some persons erroneously draw from it. The subject is a difficult one, but a little attention may make it sufficiently intelligible.

St. Peter in his first Epistle[r] addresses the persons

[r] 1 Pet. i. 2.

to whom he writes as "elect *according to the foreknowledge* of God the Father;" and this is the light in which we should regard any election to final salvation, as being simply *a part and a necessary consequence of the great mystery of God's foreknowledge.* It is certain, as St. Paul declares in the most unmistakeable language [s], that it is the will and desire of God that "all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth;" but God, Who seeth all things that were, and are, and are to come,—in Whose sight "a thousand years are as one day [t],"—God, according to and by His foreknowledge, seeth that some men will receive and profit by His mercy, and that many will resist and disappoint His divine wish; that some, therefore, will in the end be saved, but that many, despite His gracious designs towards them, will after all turn away from the knowledge of the truth, and at the last be ruined. Foreseeing this, God speaks of that which He knows *will* be *as if it already were.* He, Who (as St. Paul says) "calleth those things which *be not* as though they were [u]," speaks of future events—of facts which future time shall develope, as though they were already existing and were some present part of His providential dealings with mankind. God in His infinite knowledge viewing all things, whether past or present or to come, from the same point of time, *anticipates* that election which must take place at the day of judgment, and speaks of it *in His divine foreknowledge* as if it were already determined. The final election is not really so made beforehand; it hath not

[s] 1 Tim. ii. 4. [t] 2 Pet. iii. 8. [u] Rom. iv. 17.

at present any real substantial existence; as yet it exists only in God's foreknowledge of what will be hereafter. But since it does exist, so to say, in that foreknowledge of the Almighty,—since God foresees and foreknows it, He can speak of it beforehand as if it were already made and were in actual existence.

And in this only sense is it right to speak of any election to final salvation or final ruin. Such an election is simply *a part and a necessary consequence of God's divine foreknowledge.* Taken in this sense it will harmonize easily with the merciful promises and invitations held out by God to all men, and will not give rise to those dangerous arguments and conclusions which men have too often drawn from this doctrine.

The contemplation of the great and mysterious truth of God's foreknowledge is not likely to lead us into any erroneous views: for this reason; that while we confess the fact of God's foreknowledge, while we are sure of its truth, yet at the same time we are equally sure, on the other hand, that this Divine foreknowledge *has no direct or practical effect upon ourselves.* We may believe that God foreknows what will happen; yet we believe quite as firmly,—there is something within us, some inward conviction which positively assures us, that we are at the same time free to act as we please. No one really doubts this. Take a case in point. God foreknew who at this time would listen to the voice of conscience and perform their duty in coming forward to present themselves for Confirmation. God also knows who will

give earnest diligence now to their preparation for Confirmation, and so undertake this solemn duty in a fitting frame of mind; He knows too who will be careless and ungodly, and so lose the blessing which is offered. And yet no one doubts that all had the power of choosing, and were free to choose, what they would do; no one doubts that all may either be idle and indifferent about this matter, or sincere and earnest; no one believes that *because God foreknew* what they were about to do, that therefore they were *forced* to act either in one way or another; every one feels and is most certainly convinced that he was and is free to do as his own heart inclines him.

We may say the same thing about election. God knows who will be saved, and who will be lost; and yet we may be quite sure that God's foreknowledge does not in any way influence our election, which will be decided by nothing else than the strictest laws of justice, truth, holiness, and mercy. However difficult therefore, however absolutely impossible even, it may be to our reason to reconcile the two facts, that God certainly foreknows what will happen, and that yet men are free to act as they will; still, despite the difficulty, we can believe and be positively certain of the truth of both statements. And so whatever may be said and allowed about God's foreknowledge, we feel that it is a difficulty which in no way affects us practically. It is a mystery, the explanation of which we can patiently await in another world.

And now to return to the subject of the Holy Trinity. We believe also of the Holy Ghost, that it

has been through His divine inspiration and under His directing influence that the Holy Scriptures have been written[x].

And here let some few words be said about the inspiration of Holy Scripture.

We are to believe of Holy Scripture that it is divinely and miraculously inspired. *How* the sacred writers were inspired it is not necessary for us to enquire, and it would be unwise to attempt to give any explanation of that which God has not been pleased to reveal to us. *How far* the Scriptures are inspired, in what degree, to what extent, is a more important question. On this point we are to remember, that the Holy Scriptures were not written entirely from the dictation of God, and by men acting simply as the mouthpiece of the Almighty, as did Moses when it was said unto him, "Write thou these words; for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel[y]." The Scriptures were written by men compassed to some degree with human infirmities, and expressing themselves very often in their own imperfect language. The sacred writers were "moved" by the Divine influence, but they were not so overruled on all occasions by the Holy Spirit as that the style of writing and habit of thought natural and peculiar to them was interfered with or destroyed. The peculiarities of each writer were preserved; and thus we may recognise and allow in the sacred writings the existence of two elements: 1. The Divine inspira-

[x] 2 Pet. i. 21; 2 Tim. iii. 16; John xiv. 26, xvi. 13.

[y] Exod. xxxiv. 27.

tion; 2. The human mind and style of expression. We cannot draw any line, and say in all cases, Here the Divine influence is apparent and there the imperfect expressions of man are recognisable. We can only affirm generally, 1. That in every case the sacred writers, while using such words and expressions as were natural to them, were preserved from all errors in things divine; 2. That they were directed to the statement of all necessary truth; 3. That in many cases, perhaps, and whenever the use of particular words or expressions might be of importance, they were miraculously directed to the use of such particular words.

It must be quite clear that the importance of the exact words and expressions used must be of very different value in different passages of Scripture. For instance, in the recording some historical event it would not, perhaps, be important whether the facts were expressed in one set of words or in another; the only important thing would be, that the record of the events should be correct. Here, then, we may believe that the writer would be left to the selection of his own words, and that the Divine influence would be only exercised in a general way to direct him into all truth. But where some vital doctrine was to be taught, —where something was to be stated which is necessary for man's salvation to be believed, there we may very well suppose that not only a general, but a particular inspiration did enlighten the writer's mind, and that he was guided to the use of those exact and particular words which were needful.

Thus should we believe of Holy Scripture; and let us not be turned from this belief by any sceptical arguments which we may hear around us.

Let some few warnings, moreover, be added on this subject.

We hear very much said in these days about the discoveries of science contradicting the statements of Holy Scripture. Bear in mind, then, first, that the object and intention of Holy Scripture is to teach us of heavenly, spiritual things, and not of earthly things. It need not, therefore, really be any matter of wonder to us, if in some things relating purely and entirely to this world we find the sacred writers expressing themselves according to the commonly received opinions of their own age, rather than in accordance with the more enlarged information of later times. Even if it be a fact that the statements of inspired writers are in some particulars at variance with the scientific discoveries of later days, this need neither surprise us nor cause us any uneasiness, because *Scripture was not written to teach us of earthly, but of heavenly things;* and therefore it might very well accord with the wisdom of God to permit men to write with an ordinary intelligence about things earthly, while they wrote with an extraordinary and miraculous inspiration about things heavenly.

But observe, secondly, that it is by no means certain, (very far from it indeed!) nor is it to be allowed, that Holy Scripture and the sound discoveries of science do contradict each other in the slightest degree. It may possibly be the case that the *interpre-*

tation which persons have been accustomed to put upon Scripture, may be at variance with the recent discoveries of scientific men. But that is a very different thing from science contradicting Scripture itself. Our interpretation of Scripture may be wrong; we may be mistaken as to the true meaning of many passages in Holy Scripture, and the discoveries of science may lead us to a closer examination and to a correction of these erroneous views. Mistaken opinions as to the meaning of Scripture have undoubtedly been held in former ages. The same thing may be proved against us in these days. Thus much may be readily enough conceded. But it is one thing to admit that science may contradict our *commonly received interpretation* of Scripture, and another, and a very different thing, to allow that the discoveries of scientific men do contradict *the Word of God itself.*

This last has not as yet been proved, and probably never will be.

Observe, again, that these scientific discoveries are to be received with very considerable jealousy and caution; and are not by any means to be admitted hastily as being perfectly correct. Men may be very clever and learned, but after all may they not in some instances prove themselves to be only blind leaders of the blind? With most subjects they are very imperfectly acquainted, their so-called facts are often little else than mere guesses at the truth, and it is positively certain that there are many laws and principles of nature about which men are as yet absolutely in the dark. And these great principles, when re-

vealed by God to men's minds and when perfectly understood, may so alter the whole aspect of affairs, that possibly a hundred years hence these points, which are now so stoutly insisted on and declared to be facts, may be proved to be nothing else than human errors.

Or, again, we hear of contradictions in Holy Scripture itself; men complain that the statements of one passage in the Bible are at variance with the statements of another. On this head it might very fairly be answered, that the instances brought forward of such contradictions are in reality so trifling and so unimportant as to prove little else than that the Scriptures are what they profess to be, viz. the testimonies to the truth of many *independent* witnesses; and thus these very contradictions would tend rather to strengthen than to weaken the authority of the Bible. But in fact, many of these pretended contradictions have been satisfactorily reconciled, and these objections sufficiently answered time after time, and doubtless a fuller knowledge on some points, and a more certain information about the subjects treated of, would enable us to set at rest for ever the very last existing difficulty.

Let it be remembered, too, that because *we* do not happen to be able ourselves to explain some difficulty or to answer some objection, is no reason why persons better informed than we are may not be able to do so. *Our* not being able to explain some difficult point does not prove that no explanation is to be found, or that none can be given. The opponents of Holy Scripture are not always candid enough to admit that the difficul-

ties which they are presenting to us have been met and reasonably explained over and over again. They will constantly advance the same arguments as if they were perfectly unanswerable, and urge the same difficulties as if they were allowed to be inexplicable; and thus they will too often perplex and disturb the minds of the unstable and ill-informed.

We do not now hear for the first time an outcry against the inspiration of the Scriptures; the same has been raised again and yet again in years gone by, and still the Scriptures have survived these fierce attacks, they still hold their place in the hearts and minds of holy men, and are still regarded as being *the sacred depositories of all truth; yea, the very Word of God Himself.*

As such let us ever faithfully regard them.

And while we are diligent in the study of our Bible, while we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest these Holy Scriptures, let us pray that we may ever be able to delight ourselves in God's "testimonies," and to declare with our whole heart, "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste: yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth[z]."

Next, we express our belief in the "Holy Catholic Church," in that Church which is holy because Christ its Head is holy, because the Spirit which sanctifies it is holy, because holiness is the profession of all its members. This holy Church is Catholic, or universal. The Jewish Church was confined to one peculiar people; the Christian Church is to be spread abroad

[z] Ps. cxix. 103.

throughout the whole world[a]. This holy Church is one. As there is but one Head, which is Christ; so is there but one Body, which is the Church. But as there are many members in one body, (the whole together forming one body,) or many branches in one tree, (the whole together forming one tree,) so are there, in some sense, many Churches, many bodies of Christians each of which may be called a Church, (as St. Paul says, "The Churches of Christ salute you[b],") different branches of the one true Church of Christ. Upon these various branches, however, is urged the necessity of "holding the faith in unity of spirit, and in the bond of peace[c]." And so our Lord's solemn prayer for His Church is, "That they all may be one[d]."

It may be asked, By what marks are we to know a *true* branch of Christ's Church? By these. A true Church will be "continuing stedfastly (as did the early Christians[e]) in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." If in any company, therefore, of Christians professing to be a Church, the doctrine taught be not the doctrine of the Apostles, or if the Sacraments be not duly administered among them by ministers *lawfully called and rightly ordained*, a body so constituted may not be considered a true, sound branch of Christ's Church.

Here the question meets us, How far, as touching

[a] Matt. xxiv. 14. [b] Rom. xvi. 16.

[c] See 1 Cor. i. 10; 2 Tim. i. 13; 1 Tim. vi. 3—5; Rom. xvi. 17; 1 Cor. xii. 12—27; Eph. iv. 3—6.

[d] John xvii. 20—23. [e] Acts ii. 42.

our soul's salvation, is it *necessary* to belong to a true and pure branch of Christ's holy Church? The question cannot be answered positively. We cannot declare with certainty *how much* of the whole truth is necessary to man's salvation. We can only say that *any* departure from the truth must be dangerous; any departure from the truth separates us from some precious help and safeguard, weakens some wholesome restraint, loses us some grace, and makes the work of acquiring such a holy and Christian character, as shall fit us for heaven, more and more difficult. We can only point out to men, that for those who hold the entire truth, and who hold that truth in righteousness, there is a certainty of salvation; but it is not for us to take upon ourselves the office of judges, or to pronounce sentence upon them who differ from us in their appreciation of that truth.

As regards the Church of England, we would boldly declare our firm persuasion that she is the one true branch of Christ's Catholic Church in this country; and we would lovingly persuade all others who may have separated from her to join her pure communion, for we believe that all who live godly and Christian lives according to her rule shall certainly be saved. But further than this we may not go either to the one hand or to the other. At the end it shall be known fully who are God's people, and who shall hear the fearful words, "Depart from Me: I never knew you[f]."

This, however, may be added, and this warning

[f] Matt. vii. 23.

should be given; that if any man who is fully persuaded in his own mind of the truth of the Church's teaching does deliberately from some inferior motive, from pride, or pique, or self-interest, or the like, abandon the Church and join himself to some one of the many sects, he must do so at the very serious risk (to say the least) of his soul's salvation. It is not to be forgotten that there is such a sin as the sin of schism—a sin very gravely spoken about in Holy Scripture: "heresies," be it remembered, are numbered by St. Paul[g] among those sins of the flesh which must shut men out from any inheritance in the kingdom of God, and the connection between schism and heresy is, in many instances, very dangerously close[h]. It behoves men, therefore, to examine themselves, and to see whether they are guiltless in the sight of God in this respect. We may not constitute ourselves their judges; but they are called upon to judge themselves[i], that they may escape the judgment of God hereafter. Many men forget the important truth that we must as certainly answer for the faults and errors of our mind and intellect as we must be

[g] Gal. v. 20.

[h] Heresy (which is derived from a Greek word signifying 'choice') is a wilful adoption of opinions which are contrary to the teaching of the Apostles and the universal Church. Schism (which signifies 'division') is a separating oneself from the communion of the Church on account of some variance in matters of faith or practice. Schism and heresy in too many cases follow unavoidably each on the other's steps. One guilty of heresy usually becomes a schismatic. And it is scarcely possible for a schismatic to avoid heresy in either a less or greater degree.

[i] 1 Cor. xi. 31.

judged for the sins produced of our fleshly lusts and appetites.

One other remark may be made,—which is this: there may be cases, there certainly have been cases, wherein from some unhappy circumstances,—from lack of church accommodation, or what not,—persons have in fact been driven away from their church, and have been forced to unite themselves to some other body of professing Christians. But in such cases the want of communion with the Church, though not to be spoken of as a fault, should be regarded as a serious misfortune; and *whenever the opportunity offers*, when the hindrance is removed, persons should feel it to be their *bounden duty to return at once to the Church of their forefathers.*

With what feelings, indeed, should men regard their Church? Should it not be with the deepest love and reverence? We love all else that men count dear. Who does not love his home, and his own fireside? Where is the man that does not love his country, and his name of Englishman? Why, then, is there no corresponding feeling for our Church and for our name of Churchmen? Is that place nothing to us, where first we were presented unto Christ and first called Christians, infants as we were, fresh from the Baptismal waters? Have those walls no tender place within our memories which witness to our Confirmation vows, and which shall ever hereafter remind us of that solemn hour when, with high hopes and expectations and with hearts that burned within us, we did solemnly dedicate ourselves, our souls and bodies, to

the service of our God? Has that quiet resting-place no claim upon our love, where sleep the ashes of departed friends? Are there no cords of love which, springing thence and circling round our hearts, do bind us with the hope that at the end of our days ourselves may rest beside those treasures buried out of sight? Have those holy services and so solemn litanies which weekly arise within the church's walls, —endeared to us as they should be by the memory that for years and years gone by our fathers and their ancestors have sought in these same words the Saviour's presence,—have these no place within our hearts' affections? Can it be that these are otherwise than *sacred* to our memories and feelings? Why should any turn away from these? why speak slightingly of them? why desert them for some strange communion hallowed by no such tender reminiscences? And if it be objected that "the Church," that is, the society of Christians which we call the Church, consists not in the building, or its sacred precincts, or in these forms of worship; it may be allowed at once that this is true; it does not consist in these. And yet we cannot separate these two things—these externals which belong to the Church's service and the actual inward reality of Church-membership. For our presence in that building which we call the church, our assembling ourselves together there, our joining in those services, our receiving those holy ordinances there administered, are *the* proofs and witnesses (and, ordinarily speaking, there can be no other proof) that outwardly and in *profession* at least we are members of that body, called

"the Church," to which these things pertain. Refraining from these, withdrawing ourselves from them, what proofs can we produce of our fellowship with the Church? or how can we suppose that we are members of it?

Nay, let us ever cling to, let us ever stand fast by, let us ever love our Church. Let us pray that she may be like a tree planted by the water-side, flourishing in its beauty, bringing forth fruit in due season, as she prospers in whatsoever she doeth. Through evil report and good report let us shew ourselves devoted, loyal, faithful members of the Church of England; stedfastly believing that she is indeed a true branch of Christ's Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church,—that she is "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone[j]."

The Article of which we have just spoken is very fitly followed by that in which we express our belief in the "communion of saints;" for in this last we call to mind, that although the Church is Catholic, spread abroad throughout the world; although Christians differ in race, in language, in country, in habits, yet there is, or, alas! we must rather say, there should be, some common tie—the confession of one faith, the looking to one Saviour, the union with one Divine Head, the being animated with one hope, the being blessed with the same glorious privileges—which may bind them all together in one common bond of love and fellowship. If there be wanting any proof of the immeasurable evil

j Ephes. ii. 20.

which arises out of schism, it may be seen too plainly evidenced in the effects of that broken communion which exists in Christendom; in that want of harmony and peace, in that strife and discord and bitter uncharitableness which has destroyed the unity, and consequently the strength, and which so fatally mars the usefulness, of the Church of Christ!

Why is it that the Gospel does not take a deeper root, and fill the land in heathen countries? Why is there speech or language throughout the world where the Gospel's voice is not plainly heard? Is it not chiefly owing to the discords that exist among Christians themselves? Because they are not "perfectly joined together[k]" in the work, because they are not of one mind, because they do not speak the same thing, because they are not "at peace among themselves[l]," therefore is the work so sorely let and hindered; therefore is the tree that should be flourishing in its beauty and bearing fruit an hundredfold, too often like a "tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground[m]." Let all Christians lay this well to heart. Let each one strive to do what little he may be able towards healing the wounds which have marred the Church's unity. At least let all pray for the peace of the Church; remembering, too, that they shall prosper who do love her.

Not that the communion of saints is wholly lost. We still declare our faith in a reality. There still exists among God's people, despite their unhappy differences of creed or practice, some bond of holy

[k] 1 Cor. i. 10. [l] 1 Thess. v. 13. [m] Isa. liii. 2.

fellowship. Even though there be not any visible union and harmony between some members of Christ's body, yet in their union with their one great Head there exists in truth an actual union between the members. There is some secret undefinable feeling, which draws good men together, and which witnesses, and will witness while the world shall last, to their common membership in Christ their Head. They are children of one great family, they are fellow-citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, they belong unto the household of God. They rejoice together in their present blessings, in their high privileges, in their divinely imparted strength. They rejoice together as they live happy in the light of God's glorious countenance, in the consciousness of His continual presence with them and of His Fatherly protection; happy in their sense of that communion which exists between themselves and the Father of their spirits[n]; happy, too, beyond all words in their patient waiting,—in their waiting with the holy dead, with them who have gone before and who "sleep in Jesus," (for with these also we are joined in a most real bond of fellowship;)—in their waiting for that hour when this present communion shall be more fully realized, when they shall "see the King in His beauty[o]," when they "shall know even as also they are known[p]," when they shall pass the everlasting doors in safety, and stand before His throne at whose "right hand there is pleasure for evermore[q]."

[n] See 1 John i. 3; John xvii. 21, xiv. 23; 1 John iii. 23, 24; John vi. 56; 2 Cor. 13, 14; 1 Cor. iii. 16.

[o] Isa. xxxiii. 17. [p] 1 Cor. xiii. 12. [q] Ps. xvi. 11.

Next we confess our belief in "the forgiveness of sins." See from the following texts how fully and unmistakeably God declares His merciful intentions towards unhappy sinners: 1 Tim. i. 15; Matt. xviii. 11—14, ix. 10—13, xi. 28—30; Luke xv.

In another place our Lord's words are: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come[r]." For every sin, therefore, that men may commit there is pardon and forgiveness offered at our merciful Father's hands, save for the one unpardonable offence, the sin against the Holy Ghost. Let a few words be said about this.

The sin against the Holy Ghost is either apostasy—falling away from the faith, abandoning that which we have once held—or steadily and wilfully rejecting and denying the Christian faith after it has been plainly and evidently presented to our minds. And in speaking of this as being unpardonable, we are to remember that it is not so much that God *will* not, as that He *can* not pardon it. There is but one way of salvation open to us. The merits of Jesus Christ, which we lay hold of by faith, are the only means whereby we may be saved. If a man, therefore, examines and considers this one way, and then calmly and deliberately refuses it, he *shuts himself out* from salvation. God offers him

[r] Matt. xii. 31.

salvation in this way, but this he rejects; and there being no other way open to him, and none other name under heaven given among men "whereby he can be saved than the name of Jesus Christ[s]," it follows of necessity, that in rejecting this one Saviour he throws away his only hope, and so inevitably must be lost. By his own act he excludes himself from the possibility of forgiveness and salvation.

But why is this rejection of the faith called a sin against the Holy Ghost? and why does our Lord declare that to speak against the Son of Man shall be forgiven, but to speak against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven? Because, 1; The One who shall teach men all things, who shall guide them into all truth, the One through whom spiritual things are revealed unto us, is none other than the Holy Ghost. In rejecting the truth, therefore, we resist and grieve and do despite unto that Spirit of grace. Because, 2; The teaching of our Blessed Lord was not so plain and unmistakeable, but that men might be forgiven if they missed the truth He taught. Christ spake in parables of the mysteries of the kingdom of God[t]. Men were not guiltless, indeed, of all sin in disbelieving Him[u]. For His "very works' sake[x]" they ought to have believed. But the disbelieving Christ's mysterious teaching was not the same thing as the rejecting that clearer revelation of the truth and that greater light which was shed abroad upon the coming of the Holy Ghost; it did not betray so hopeless a

[s] Acts iv. 12. [t] Mark iv. 11, 12. [u] John xv. 22.
[x] Ibid. xiv. 11.

state of wilfulness and obstinacy on the part of unbelievers. Our Lord's doctrine was not so clear and easy to understand, but what the time should come when the truth might be set more plainly still before men's minds. This plain, direct, positive, unmistakeable teaching did follow upon the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then the truth was evidently taught. Then the truth was so plainly taught, that no teaching could possibly be plainer. If men, therefore, rejected this plain teaching of the Holy Ghost, there were no means left whereby the truth could be more clearly demonstrated to their hearts and minds. God had then done all for them that could be done; there was no more powerful engine left for their conversion; and if they still turned a deaf ear to the pleadings of the Holy Spirit, as He strove to bring home to their minds a conviction of the truth, if they would be "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely," there could be nothing for it but that they should be left to their own devices, to the foolish imaginations of their own hearts, and so be lost. Thus we may regard the sentence pronounced upon this sin against the Holy Ghost as being not an act of severity on the part of God, however well deserved such severity might be, but a necessary unavoidable result of man's own wilfulness. It is man's own folly in obstinately rejecting the forgiveness and salvation which God so freely and graciously offers to him.

For every sin, therefore, which weak erring men may commit there is forgiveness offered, save for that

one unpardonable offence of which we have spoken, and for which we need not say there *shall not be*, but rather there *cannot be*, forgiveness. Still we are ever to bear in mind that forgiveness is offered to us, of God's mercy, *only on certain conditions*. What these conditions are St. Paul declared when he testified, "both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, *repentance* towards God, and *faith* toward our Lord Jesus Christ[7]." The conditions upon which God is willing to forgive us for Jesus Christ's sake are repentance and faith. Let something be said about each of these.

Repentance is not only a feeling of sorrow for the past, but it is also a desire to amend in the future. It is in its strict sense "a change of mind." It is a feeling which causes us to sorrow over our sins, and to endeavour to amend them, not only in consequence of the punishment to fall on us on account of those sins, but far more because of the offence and grief these are to God,—to our *Father*, to One who is so good and loving to us, to One who has done so much for us. It is the mourning of a heart which has become sensible of the great love of God, and which is yearning to return that love. It is a sorrowful conviction that sin makes us vile and unclean in the sight of God, that through our sinfulness we are unfit to serve Him, and incapable of rendering Him any perfect or fitting obedience. This is the spirit and the essence of a true repentance. But as in the matter of repentance it is very easy for us to be deceived, let three plain proofs or marks be added whereby we may know whether we

[7] Acts xx. 21.

be sincere in our professed repentance or not. First, if we are really penitent we shall carefully *avoid all occasion and opportunity of sin;* we shall, as far as possible, *keep ourselves out of the way of temptation.* If we are earnest in our repentance we shall examine ourselves; we shall sift our past lives in the presence of God, and find out what are our besetting sins. Then we shall trace these sins to their spring and fountain-head. We shall first say to ourselves, 'What have I done wrong?' and then, 'How came I to do this? What tempted me to do this evil?' We shall endeavour to call to mind what chain of circumstances brought about our fall; what motives, what desires, what company, what business caused our sins. And then if we are sincere we shall lay the axe to these roots of our sins, we shall give these up, we shall avoid them and flee from them. Never mind how pleasant or agreeable these may be, or even how seemingly necessary; never mind at what pain or sacrifice to our feelings we may be acting; if we are in earnest, and if our repentance be a true repentance, we shall at once and honestly and entirely abandon all those things which our experience teaches us lead to sin.

To put this in a very plain way, let it be said, for instance, what right has any man who has given way to the sin of drunkenness, and who pretends to lament that sin,—what right has such an one to set his foot within a public-house? He knows that he cannot resist temptation; what right, then, has he to expose himself to such temptation? Or what right has some young man, who is painfully conscious of the weakness

of his character, and of his inability to refuse to follow when others lead the way to sin,—what right has such an one to be with companions who (as he is very well aware) will draw him into evil? Or what right have young women to be in such places or such positions—alone, unprotected, away from their parents' eye—as shall expose them to the opportunity of sin? What right have they to speak of virtue or of modesty, when they bring those graces unblushingly face to face with sin? or how may they, with any truth, deplore the loss of these and speak of penitence, while yet with wilful folly they expose themselves to strong temptation? No. Let it be well borne in mind that our repentance is only worthless and delusive, unless with our professed sorrow for past sin we join a very careful watchfulness to avoid (as far as possible) every temptation and every opportunity of offending against God's holy law. Christ's precept must be our rule of life: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell[z]."

A second proof of the truth and sincerity of our repentance is a willingness on our parts to make *reparation* for our fault,—to make (as it is said in the exhortation used in the Service for the Communion) "restitution and satisfaction according to the uttermost of our powers." We are not indeed to imagine, when we speak of making reparation for our faults,

[z] Matt. v. 29.

that any after act of ours can do away the guilt of our sin, or can wash our souls from its stain. Nothing that we can do may effect this. If we had sinned but once in all our lives, and then for years and years had lived in ways of godliness and virtue, the strictness of our later life could never efface that one single stain. To blot out our iniquities from the book of God's remembrance is the work—and His only—of the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. Yet while we cannot do away the sin itself, it is our positive duty to endeavour to repair the consequences of our sin: and if we are really penitent we shall willingly and faithfully discharge that duty.

A common example will make this plain. A person, we will suppose, has stolen a sum of money: and after he has committed the theft, his conscience begins to smite him, and he feels guilty and unhappy. But dare such an one come before God, with that money still in his possession, and bewail himself and pray forgiveness? No, surely not. He were a liar and a hypocrite in the eyes of a just God if he acted so. But if when his conscience smote him he did straightway turn unto the person he had robbed, and with humble confession of his fault did restore the stolen property, then might he afterward appear in the presence of God: not indeed as guiltless; not as if the restoring the money had wiped out the guilt of stealing it: nay, he comes before God a thief, and confessing himself a thief; but yet a *penitent* one, and one, therefore, who may hear the same gracious words of pardon addressed *to him* as did the thief upon the cross. This is an

instance of what is meant by making reparation for our sin. And it must be perfectly evident that without it, in the case described, the pretended repentance could not have been real. In like manner, persons who have wilfully and knowingly slandered their neighbour, must confess and retract such slanders. He who has defrauded any one, must restore his ill-gotten gains. He who has done any wrong, must (if possible) undo that wrong before his professed repentance can be acceptable in the sight of God.

And if it be thought that this is a very hard rule, a very hard condition to fulfil, one that men would not readily submit to or carry out;—Yes, it must be answered, it is a very hard rule, and one that man, unassisted by Divine grace, never could act up to. But learn from this two things: First, that true repentance is no *easy* matter, (as Satan so often tempts men to believe it is,) it is no light work to be undertaken at any moment, and to be carried on without any pain or trouble; on the contrary, the path of true penitence is difficult and rugged, narrow and strait: and, alas! few there be that persevere along it to the end. Secondly, learn that true repentance is the gift of God[a], and must be sought for at His merciful hands. True repentance is the work of Divine grace in a man's heart. To "bring forth fruits meet for repentance" is too hard a thing for man's unassisted strength. The "repentance to salvation not to be repented of[b]" is produced and perfected in us by nothing else than "the goodness of God[c]." If we would repent, then,

[a] Acts v. 31. [b] 2 Cor. vii. 10. [c] Rom. ii. 4.

with any earnestness and sincerity, or to any good effect, we must humbly cry to God, "Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned[d]."

The third proof of the depth and reality of our repentance is the manner and spirit in which we regard the faults of other people. A true penitent will be very tender and charitable towards the sins of others. An humble remembrance of his own misdoings, a sense of what he would have been himself but for God's undeserved mercy, a consciousness of his own frailty will always restrain him from any harsh censorious judging of his neighbour's life. This is a very sure test whereby we may prove our professed repentance. None who are really possessed with a godly sorrow for their own past sin will be uncharitable towards the faults of other men.

Much has thus been said concerning repentance, because it is a subject about which men are too easily and too willingly deceived. Yet is this a matter of nothing less than life or death to us, since a true, sincere, earnest repentance is one necessary condition to our obtaining God's forgiveness of our past sins.

The other condition is faith: let something in turn be said of this. St. Paul describes faith to be that firm persuasion of the mind which causes those things, which as yet we do only hope for and do not actually see with our eyes, to be as substantially real to us as if we positively knew them through the evidence of our senses. Our faith, for instance, causes God to be to us as really an existing Being, as if our minds were

[d] Jer. xxxi. 18.

already ravished with the glories of His immediate presence. Our faith makes the precious sacrifice once offered upon the cross by our Lord (blessed for ever!) and the effects of that sacrifice to be as sure and certain to our minds, as if we were indeed kneeling beneath that cross with sad though adoring gaze, or were already entering on the eternal glory which that sacrifice has purchased for us. Our faith makes the presence and the influence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts as great and as blessed a reality to us, as if we actually heard with our ears His persuasive voice behind us, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it[e];" or felt His directing hand guiding us along the path of life.

Christian faith is a belief in all those points of doctrine which go to make up the scheme of salvation declared by Christ and His Apostles. In *all* of them, not in *some* only. It is not enough to believe that Jesus died to save us from the punishment due to sin, while we forget that He also came to save us from the power of sin itself. It is not enough to believe that Christ came to restore us to the position of God's children, while we remain in wilful ignorance of those duties which as children we are bound to render to our heavenly Father. It is not enough to believe in the wondrous love and mercy of God revealed to us in the Gospel, while we care not to remember too His truth, and justice, and holiness. The faith whereby men are to be saved, and which is a fixed condition of our salvation, is a full and undoubting belief in the

[e] Isa. xxx. 21.

entire scheme for man's redemption in Christ Jesus our Lord, which the love of God has made known to us.

And this faith is necessary, because just as without repentance men would never amend their lives and become fit for God's presence in heaven, so without faith they would never accept and embrace and rely on that one way of life whereby God will have all men to be saved.

Upon these conditions, then, upon our repentance and faith, God is willing to forgive us our sins for Jesus Christ's sake.

Finally, we express our belief in the resurrection of our bodies at the last day, and in their existence throughout eternity in a state of either happiness or misery. We believe that these bodies of ours which shall be turned into dust in the grave, will in the end, at the great day of account, be raised again, and be joined once more unto our souls to live for ever. This is a great mystery. Yet may the difficulty be somewhat lessened if we bear in mind the important fact that *matter is imperishable.* It may lose its present shape; it may have utterly and entirely passed away from any human recognition; but *it cannot be annihilated.* Though we perceive it not, yet does it exist to the Divine perception. To the sight of God every atom is still present, not one is lost to Him Who seeth all things. And to His Almighty power the collecting these scattered atoms, and the producing out of these a new and glorious body, is no im*possibility.* As from the seed, which decays and

perishes in the earth, the Divine wisdom causes the newly developed plant to spring in all its wondrous beauty; so from the undistinguishable atoms of our natural body, which have been "sown in corruption," the word of the Lord can raise an incorruptible, immortal, spiritual body to the praise and honour of His own glorious majesty. And these risen bodies are to enter upon an endless existence; they are to live for ever and ever: the wicked are to "go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal[f]."

These are the articles of the Christian faith which we promise to believe.

Let it be remarked here, that it is the habit of some persons to repeat the Apostles' Creed with their daily devotions, imagining it to be *a prayer*. This is a mistake. It is very right, indeed, to repeat the Creed. But the Creed is not a prayer, and is not to be regarded as such. Still while the Creed is not and cannot be a prayer, it may be *said devotionally*, and a life and reality may be imparted to its various sentences, very different from the meaningless formality with with which it falls from too many a lip. Thus, while we confess our belief in God the Father, the Maker of heaven and earth, the thought may pass through our minds as to whether we, the creatures of His hand, are rendering to Him the love and the obedience which we are so deeply bound to pay? When we declare with our lips that Jesus Christ is Lord, the question may arise, Is He my Lord also, Lord of my heart and of my affections? When we speak of Christ's

[f] Matt. xxv. 46.

lowly birth of the humble Mary, (humble, yet blessed in the lips of all coming generations,) our silent prayer may ascend to heaven, that we too may be as little children in meekness and humility of heart. When we recall His precious death upon the cross, the form of the Crucified One may be present to our minds; we may adore His surpassing love, and pray the while that our souls may be washed from all uncleanness in the streams of His most precious blood. The descent into the grave and the resurrection from the dead may kindle in us the desire that we may die unto sin, and be buried unto all carnal lusts and appetites, and rise again with Christ unto newness and holiness of life. As we confess the Saviour's ascension and His seat at the right hand of God, our eyes may be lifted up to Him our Mediator, imploring His all-prevailing intercession on our behalf now, and ever throughout our lives. As we acknowledge Him to be the One who shall come again to be our Judge, the question will at once arise within us, Where in that dread day will my lot be found? Oh may I hope to stand at the Saviour's right hand among the blessed? Or shall I be reckoned among the poor lost souls whose place is in that outer darkness where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? As we profess our belief in the Holy Ghost, in the Catholic Church, in the communion of saints, in the forgiveness of sins, in the resurrection of the body, and in the life everlasting, these each in turn may suggest their own separate and peculiar thoughts; and as the words do pass our lips the hope may rise within us that we may in-

deed be ever temples of the Holy Ghost, that we may live worthy of our vocation as members of Christ's Church, that we may be numbered with God's saints now in their present state of blessedness, and at the last be with them "in the glory everlasting." So may we use the Creed to our greater comfort and edification, and prove the truth of the Apostle's declaration, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation[s]."

[s] Rom. x. 10.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BAPTISMAL VOW: OBEDIENCE.

THIRDLY, we promise to keep God's will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of our life.

On these commandments let it be first remarked generally, that we are to keep them, not only in the letter, but in the spirit; and again, we are not only *not to break* them, but we are not *to wish to break* them.

The commandments are divided into two parts. The first four teach us our duty towards God; the last six teach us our duty towards our neighbour. Let the position of these commandments teach us one all-important lesson, viz., that our first thought should be to love and fear GOD. This is (strange as it may appear) too often forgotten. What is so common as to hear men speak of "never having injured any one," of "being in charity with all the world," of "having fulfilled all the duties of their several stations honestly and faithfully?" and then they will rest on this, and foolishly imagine that the fulfilment of their duty towards their neighbour can excuse their neglect of the more important duty owed to God. But this is a mere delusion. It is first of all required of us, that we *give our hearts to God.* First are we called upon to believe in God, to fear and love Him with all our soul and strength; this is our earliest duty, nothing may take the place of this: our duty towards our neighbour

follows afterwards. This God teaches plainly, for what is His first commandment? nothing else than this, "*Thou shalt have none other gods but Me.*" In this we are taught that the Lord is to be the one great centre of the soul's affections. He is to be the Being whom alone we are to worship and adore. He is to be the One in whom we are to repose our heart's best trust and confidence; under His providence we are to "live and move and have our being." God is to be the soul's *great good.*

And how are we to acquire such feelings towards God? How may we learn to love Him? or to regard Him as our Father, and as our best and truest Friend? In answer to this it must be said, that the power of loving God is a divine gift, and as such must be sought for at God's hand. By God's grace only may we poor fallen creatures be enlivened with any feeling of true devotion. The love of God is the result of God's presence with us: thus St. Paul says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us[h]." The first of all the fruits of the Spirit, too, is described as being "love[i]." But while this is so, it is also true that the grace of God works in us and produces the desired effects by *natural means;* and therefore we may say, that in whatever way we should ordinarily learn to love and trust any human being in this world, by the very same means may we be drawn to give our hearts to God. Thus, it is not an utter stranger, a person of whom we know literally nothing, that we can love here in this world. Love

[h] Rom. v. 5. [i] Gal. v. 22.

and friendship are produced by constant companionship and intercourse with another; by our admiration of that other's qualities and character; by a sense of kindness and favour received; by our appreciation of the other's goodness and amiability and excellence. And in no other way can we acquire any real love for God. If we would love, we must learn to *know* God; we must call to mind what He is, and what He has done for us; we must dwell on these things; think of them, very often meditate on them. It is by the diligent study of Holy Scripture in particular that we shall become acquainted with God, with His character, His greatness, His beneficence. There, in His own Word, God has revealed Himself to us; and there must we learn what *He* is "with whom we have to do[k]." This, remember, should be our great object in reading the Bible. It is not the simple *reading* of the Bible, as a task to be got through, that can be of any value to us. The result produced on our minds through our reading, the information we thereby acquire, the experience we obtain,—these are the important points. We should read the Scriptures in order to become acquainted with God's will, as therein declared; we should read in order that we may learn how to conduct ourselves in various positions and circumstances of life; that we may receive support and encouragement or warning from the various histories recorded; that we may obtain full information about our duties, our privileges, our blessings, our responsibilities. But above all, we should study our Bibles for the one express

[k] Heb. iv. 13.

object of learning to *know God.* Thus is it, then; by knowing God, by holding communion with Him, by realizing and constantly seeking His immediate presence,—thus is it that we may, under Divine grace, obtain the power to love and trust in Him with all our hearts and all our souls.

2. By the second commandment we are forbidden to interpose anything between our own souls and the one true God, Who alone is worthy of our heart's love and adoration. God is a Spirit, and it is by our spirits, by that unseen part of our being which dwells in the fleshly tabernacles of our bodies, that our worship is to be rendered. Anything, then, which can hinder the soul's approach to God Himself,—anything on which the soul may rest, and thus stop short of God in its devotion, is forbidden. All mere "*formality*" in religion, therefore, is hereby especially condemned. By "*formality*," be it remembered, is not meant "*the use of forms*" in our worship of the Almighty. Let this common error be seen through and avoided. Indeed, so far from forms of prayer being condemned, there is the highest sanction for, at any rate, one form of prayer. For what else than a form is that model of all prayers, which our Lord Himself has left for His Church's use? When we pour out that best of all petitions, addressing God as "Our Father," what are we in truth doing but using a *form* of prayer? And not only are forms allowable, but they are an actual necessity. There cannot possibly be any *public* worship without the use of forms. Even if the prayer offered up by a minister in a congregation be an extemporaneous one, yet to

every one else than himself in the congregation such a prayer must be a form; as much a form as if it were read aloud from a printed book. The using of a form, therefore, is unavoidable; but this is not "formality." Formality in religious worship consists not necessarily in the use of forms. We may be just as *formal* while we use *our own* untaught expressions in prayer, as when we repeat some well-remembered collect.

Formality in our devotions really consists in our not seeking after God in spirit and in truth; it consists in offering up petitions or uttering words of praise and adoration without any sensible lifting of the *heart* to the Almighty.

It is formality when we attend any place of worship from a mere sense of duty, or from habit only, or from a compliance with the demands of what the world around us calls respectability. It is formality if we receive the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper without any conscious striving after communion with our Lord therein. If we regard that Sacrament as being of itself *an end*, and suppose the mere partaking of it outwardly to be sufficient; if we use it not as a *means to an end*,—that end being oneness with Christ; if in the receiving that blessed Sacrament we discern not the Lord's Body; if there is no craving after the communion of the Blood of Christ in that cup of blessing, no looking for the communion of the Body of Christ in the bread which we break[1],—then is such a coming to the table of the Lord nothing else than mere formality.

[1] 1 Cor. x. 16.

A reliance on the simple *act* of worship which the members of our body may perform, but in which our spirits bear no part,—which in truth does nothing else than interpose a cloud between our souls and the light of God's glorious countenance,—this is formality; and as such is forbidden by the second commandment. Anything, let it be repeated, which interposes itself between God and our souls, any reliance on the mere act of worship, anything with which we may remain satisfied and contented instead of seeking a closer and more real communion with God, anything which in any way hinders or prevents the soul's drawing near to its Maker, is forbidden. That which alone is valuable to us, and that which alone is acceptable to God, is the humble sincere love, trust, and adoration of the soul as it bows itself before the Father of spirits.

As regards the declaration contained in this commandment, that God will "visit the sins of the fathers upon the children," while we acknowledge the necessity of this,—for in the very nature of things it cannot be otherwise,—yet in this rule, which sounds so severe, let us also recognise the overruling mercy of God. Perhaps nothing could be devised more likely to bring men to a better way of life than the remembrance of what fatal consequences their sins must entail upon their children. Men will often be indifferent about themselves; they will be ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of present enjoyment and indulgence of their carnal appetites, when none but themselves are concerned; and yet, despite this reckless feeling, they will frequently check themselves in their career, and

will amend their ways, when they find that others may be involved and brought to ruin by the consequences of their misconduct. So surely do the wisdom and mercy of God make all things work together for our good.

Of one other thing, too, we may be well assured, however difficult or impossible it may now be for us to understand, viz. that every person born into the world,—be his position, or circumstances, or disadvantages what they may,—*every person* will be found hereafter to have been so dealt with by God, as that salvation and an escape from eternal misery was placed within his reach, if he had chosen to avail himself of the opportunities granted to him. To no person whatever will salvation be proved to have been an impossibility, or damnation an unavoidable necessity. At the day of judgment God's perfect justice will be fully vindicated, and His goodness and mercy to every living man will be plainly manifested.

3. By the third commandment we are enjoined to reverence the great and holy name of God. We are forbidden to give way to rash profane swearing. The commandment does not condemn or disallow that solemn and serious taking of an oath before a minister of justice, such as our laws require. This is certainly permitted by God. But we are warned by this commandment that the rash use of hasty, profane, or blasphemous expressions will surely bring down upon us the wrath of God. "I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words

thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned[m]." Let this solemn declaration of our Lord be continually in our minds, our warning and our safeguard.

It is not only by rash and profane swearing, however, that we may break this commandment. Whensoever we are careless and irreverent in our prayers, drawing nigh to God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him; whenever we pray *hypocritically*,—confessing our sins, for instance, and asking God's merciful forgiveness of them, while in truth we love these sins and intend to indulge ourselves in them; or beseeching God to "lead us not into temptation" while we ourselves wilfully and knowingly expose ourselves to such temptation; whenever, entering into the courts of the Lord's house, we are unmindful of God's great presence and permit our thoughts to wander idly to vain and worldly matters, though outwardly we are joining in the worship of the Almighty; whenever we take part in singing praises to God in the congregation without any serious thought of what we are about; whenever, again, we allow ourselves to speak sneeringly and contemptuously of God's Word, of His Church, or of religion generally,—in all such ways we may break this third commandment, and, doing so, we shall be guilty in the sight of God.

4. A reverent observance of the Lord's Day is also enjoined on us by God. 'How should we keep our Sunday?' is a very common question. But in truth this question will admit of no such direct and positive

[m] Matt. xii. 36, 37.

answer as shall be equally applicable to all persons. No rules for the proper Christian observance of the Lord's Day can be given which shall apply equally to the rich and to the poor, to the educated and the uneducated, to those whose days are comparatively days of leisure and to those whose lives are passed in hard and incessant work, to those who have their dwellings in the densely crowded and unwholesome courts and alleys of large towns, and to those who are always breathing the pure fresh country air,—that which in some cases might be lawful, in others would be wholly inexcusable.

This only can be said which may apply to every one, viz., Sunday is God's day,—a day to be used as far as possible in God's service, and to God's honour and glory. Worldly *business* is to be wholly and entirely banished from it. But what portion of the day should be occupied in the actual worship of God, and what may be devoted to innocent and harmless recreation, must be determined according to each man's position and circumstances in life, and by each man's individual conscience. Evidently the more time that can be given to communion with God, the greater strength and refreshment the soul will be likely to receive. The more that this world is shut out, and the more that our thoughts are fixed on high and heavenly things, the larger increase of Divine grace will be obtained by us. But how much time should be set apart for religious exercises, and how much may be abandoned to the recreating of our bodies and to our indulgence in innocent pleasures, can only be determined by the circum-

stances of each man's individual case. Only let every one endeavour so to spend his Sunday, and so to keep God's day holy, that at the close of it he may be able to lie down to rest "with the answer of a good conscience towards God," and with the power of blessing God for that grace which has enabled him to turn the past day to good account.

But since one part of the Sunday's duty (which under no ordinary circumstances whatever may be omitted) is the assembling ourselves together for public worship, let some few words of advice be given about our behaviour in church.

First; let none indulge that slovenly and ungodly habit of coming *late* into church. What an amazing carelessness and indifference, and what insolence towards God, do persons exhibit by being habitually late in their attendance at church! What an important part of the service, too, do they miss by such idleness! That which they should join in more than in any thing else, viz. the humble confession of their sins; that which should be most precious to them, viz. God's loving message of pardon and forgiveness to all them that will be penitent and faithful,—the comfort of these, through their tardiness, they lose. A poor beginning this, indeed, in preparation for the coming service. Moreover, what an unseemly noise and disturbance is always caused by persons coming late into church. What a hindrance is it to the prayers of other people. What an interruption to the general devotion of the congregation; whereby, be it remembered, *God is robbed* of some honour and worship due unto Him. Let this

careless habit be most strictly guarded against. Let our aim and rule be always *to be in church five minutes before the commencement of the service.* And let this time be occupied in preparing our heart to serve the Lord (by silent meditation, or by reading a psalm or some other portion of Holy Scripture) as we bear in mind the Wise Man's words, "Before thou prayest prepare thyself, and be not as one that tempteth the Lord[n]."

Again: when we are in church let us endeavour to realize to ourselves the great truth of *God's immediate presence* there[o]. Let us think that we kneel at God's very footstool; that His eye is fixed on us; that His ear is open to us; that He is waiting to receive our prayers and the adoration of our hearts. Nothing can so surely keep us from inattention, and carelessness, and wandering thoughts as this remembrance of the awful but most blessed *nearness* of Almighty God.

Again: let us be careful to preserve the appointed and proper *postures*,—to kneel when we should kneel, to stand when we should stand. An indifference about our postures will generally lead to indifference about the matter in which we are, or ought to be, engaged.

Again: let us avoid the idle habit of staring about the church, watching the behaviour of those who may be near us, looking at their dress, &c., or having our attention easily distracted. A wandering eye will produce wandering thoughts. If we cannot always govern our thoughts, we can at least govern our eyes; and if these be fixed upon our Prayer-books, we shall

[n] Ecclus. xviii. 23. [o] Matt. xviii. 20.

find it a great assistance in our endeavours to control our thoughts.

Again: let none fall into the common error of imagining the sermon to be the most important part of the service. There is no religious worship in listening to a sermon. It may be very useful to us, very edifying, very instructive; but there is no *worship* in giving our attention to a sermon. And if it be simply for the interest and instruction afforded by the sermon that we come to church, our attendance there will not be followed by much profit to our souls. Communion with God in prayer, the praising and magnifying God's holy Name, the rendering publicly to God (as we are most bounden) the homage of our hearts, the humble confession of our sins, the being assured of God's willingness to forgive us,—these are the objects for which we assemble ourselves together; and these should first be done if we would bring ourselves into that frame of mind wherein a sermon may be really edifying to us.

Again: upon leaving the church *avoid* as far as possible *falling into conversation* immediately: let some time be given to calm and quiet reflection upon the service in which you have just been engaged. And lastly, let it be the aim and acknowledged duty of every one to be present *twice* on Sunday at the services of the church. Let us not come before the Lord in a grudging spirit, giving as little of our time as possible to Him, "who giveth us richly all things to enjoy[p]." But rather feeling with the Psalmist, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto

[p] 1 Tim. vi. 17.

Thy name, O Most High: to shew forth Thy loving-kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night[q]," let us ever be "glad" when they say unto us, "Let us go into the house of the Lord[r]."

5. At the head of the last six commandments stands that which teaches us the duty of *obedience*—of obedience generally; of obedience to all those who are placed in authority over us; obedience of the people to their rulers[s], of servants to their masters[t], of persons to their spiritual teachers[u], of children to their parents[x]. This last alone is actually specified in the commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother." This is specified particularly, because the obedience of a child to its parent is the foundation of all other obedience. It is the first and earliest lesson which can be impressed upon the opening mind. The first lesson which can be taught a child is obedience to its parents. To honour its father and mother, to yield to them, to trust them, to reverence and respect their commands is *the religion* of a child. The infant mind as yet knows nothing of its God: the love and worship due to Him are as yet a hidden mystery. Its whole notion and idea of right and wrong is contained in the duty of obedience to its parents. This is the foundation on which the observance of all other duties will be built. An obedient child will make an obedient man. A wilful, disobedient, irreverent child will make a wicked and ungodly man. Therefore is this commandment placed the first of all

[q] Ps. xcii. 1, 2. [r] Ibid. cxxii. 1. [s] Rom. xiii. 1—5; Tit. iii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. [t] 1 Pet. ii. 18; Col. iii. 22—24. [u] Heb. xiii. 17. [x] Ephes. vi. 1—3; Col. iii. 20.

those which teach our duty to our fellow-men. In thinking of the obedience due from children to their parents, let us guard ourselves from the error of imagining that this is a duty confined to *childhood* only. Far otherwise. While the parent's life is spared, the tender respect and reverence and the filial deference, which are due, will be ever rendered by the loving child. A good man will know that, in God's eyes, disobedience, disrespect, want of love and tenderness shewn to a parent, is a most grievous sin, and one which, sooner than any other, will cause the Almighty to shut up His own tender mercies in displeasure. He will feel that the sight of an old man treated with disrespect and slighted in his own family is a *disgrace to all his children*, and that bitter tears drawn from the dim old eyes, or that bitter sorrows which bow down the old gray head, when caused by thankless and irreverent children, do indeed cry out to heaven with an exceeding loud and piercing voice, demanding a most just and speedy retribution. That wicked and most accursed thought (accursed in the sight of God) of an aged parent's being *a burden* to be got rid of, in any manner and through any means, will find no place in the heart of one who is diligent to keep God's commandments. He will bear in mind the Wise Man's words, "He that forsaketh his father is as a blasphemer; and he that angereth his mother is cursed of God[7]." He will remember that, however respectable or seemingly excellent in all other respects a man's character may be, however sober, temperate, chaste,

[7] Ecclus. iii. 16.

honest, upright his life may appear, yet all these seeming virtues in the sight of God and in the eyes of holy men are spoilt and marred, and are nothing worth, if he fails the while in reverence to his parents. Those good deeds by themselves and without some filial duty can claim no blessing, while to the obedient child God will be ever gracious; He will prolong his days, and it shall be well with him upon the earth [z].

6. We are not to set aside this sixth commandment, and imagine that it does not concern us in any way, and that we need scarcely join in that prayer in the Communion Service, "Incline our hearts to keep this law." It may be very true that we do not feel any inclination to the shedding of another's blood. So far from presenting any temptation to our minds, indeed, the very thought of murder may be absolutely abhorrent to us. It might be really impossible to us to stretch out our hands to take our neighbour's life. But even if this be so, we are not therefore entirely free from any danger of breaking this commandment. If we call to mind our Lord's words upon this subject, we shall know that what is here forbidden and what is hateful in God's sight is not only the actual crime of murder, but as well that temper, that spirit, that disposition, which, if perfectly unrestrained and suffered to go on and develope itself, may, if the occasion offers, issue out into a deed of blood. Thus our Lord speaks on this matter in His Sermon on the Mount: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment;

[z] Ephes. vi. 3.

but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire[a]." Here our Lord declares that not the letter of the law alone, but the spirit of the law it is which should govern Christians in their lives, and by which they must be judged in the sight of God. Our Saviour warns us that they are regarded by God as breaking this great commandment who indulge that perverse disposition which we call ill-temper, or who suffer themselves to cherish feelings of malice, ill-will, or causeless anger against any of their brethren. All such feelings partake of the nature of murder. They are the evil seeds which, if permitted to come to maturity, will bear the fruit of murder.

It is hardly necessary for us to be reminded that the seed which we sow, and the fruit which that seed produces, are in fact the very same substance, only in different stages of existence. We sow the corn in the ground: the blade springs up, which is still corn in another stage; and the full ear follows, and this too is corn, which giveth bread to strengthen man's heart. So, too, the act of murder, and the evil, malicious, ungoverned temper, do both partake of one nature. The one is the root of the other. The one is the miserable seed; the other the frightful fruit which the seed, if fostered and not checked in its growth, may very possibly produce: and, being such, both are abominable in the sight of Him who, being Love itself, must hold such tempers in abhorrence. Nor is there

[a] Matt. v. 21, 22.

any difficulty in tracing the connection between the two,—between the temper and the deed of blood. There are instances, indeed, of men who deliberately, and for most base and wicked purposes, have planned the taking of another's life. Wicked companions, a dissolute life, the promptings of the devil, have brought men to this depth of iniquity. But such instances are rare, perhaps, compared with that more frequent cause of murder, a hasty and ill-governed temper, which in innumerable cases has brought on quarrels, when some fatal and irrevocable blow is given, causing a brother's blood to cry for vengeance. This is the commonest cause of murder. Men meet together: their passions are inflamed, perchance, by drink: some foolish word is spoken, "raca," "thou fool," or something similar; then the ungoverned temper blazes up, a hot dispute arises, blows soon follow on hard words, and presently, in a moment of wild madness, the evil fruit is borne, and *that* is done which drives a man to be a wretched outcast from his fellows, or which brings him to a death of shame; *that* is done, which no agony of grief, no bitter tears, no life-long penitence can undo. And a man, one who in his sober moments would abhor the deed, even as we should now, becomes a murderer,—a murderer, because he had not learned to rule his evil and unchristian temper. Well has Solomon said, "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water[b]." And again, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city[c]."

Perhaps we may take the sixth commandment as

[b] Prov. xvii. 14. [c] Ibid. xvi. 32.

laying this plain injunction on us all, (the force and necessity of which we shall more easily allow, than of the law "Thou shalt not kill:") this, *Rule thy temper;* restrain that hasty spirit, that hot angry disposition to which so many men are prone; that temper which displays itself very frequently in provoking, bitter, sneering, or abusive words; that temper which is apt to take offence, which is unforgiving, which ever resents injuries and nourishes thoughts of vengeance; which is easily and on slight grounds aroused, and which burns fiercely, devouring everything around. Restrain, control, subdue, mortify this temper, for this is the root whence murder springs.

7. Of the sin of uncleanness forbidden by the seventh commandment but few words may here be spoken. It is the most fearful, the most defiling of all sins. This is a sin against those bodies of ours, which are, as St. Paul declares, temples of the Holy Ghost[d]. This only may be said. Preserve yourselves jealously from the *beginnings* of this sin. Keep your *thoughts* pure. Turn away from the contemplation of any impurity as you would flee from some fearful shape of evil. Carefully avoid anything that can possibly lead to or suggest this defilement,—bad books, pictures, places, entertainments, companions. Anything that can beget within you even a single unclean, impure imagination, avoid as you would avoid the presence of Satan himself.

Let this caution be added. About all other sins we may and should examine ourselves; we may seek to learn how our sins arose in us, from whence their hold

[d] 1 Cor. vi. 18, 19.

on us proceeds, how best they may be resisted and disarmed. But of this one dark sin let us question nothing; let us only put it from us; we may not dally with it for one moment, we may not give it place, no, not for one single instant. If we are so unhappy as to have sinned in thought or word or deed, we must only hide ourselves from the remembrance of the pollution, and cry aloud to God, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

8. When it is said unto us in the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," it is not simply meant to forbid our committing direct acts of robbery; but the injunction is hereby laid upon us to be honest and upright and straightforward in all our dealings with our fellow-men. Actually to *steal* is at all hands confessed to be base and miserable and mean. But there are many ways in which men may break this commandment, and be dishonest in the sight of a just God, about which we sometimes give ourselves but little concern. The incurring *debts*, which we can never reasonably hope to pay, is a breach of this commandment. Receiving payment for work which we have not faithfully performed; using our "neighbour's service without wages, and giving him not for his work [e];" hard and oppressive and extortionate bargains with those who are at our mercy; idleness and waste on the part of a servant, and neglect of his master's interests,—these all are acts of dishonesty. In buying and selling, again, to palm off inferior articles for good ones, to take advantage of a person's ignorance, to use the false balance

[e] Jer. xxii. 13.

and the scant measure[f], to adulterate goods, to pretend that things *are* what on trial they will not prove to be; or, on the buyer's part, unjustly to depreciate an article which is really good, to attempt to obtain a thing at a price below its real value, in all these several ways it is common to offend against the spirit of this commandment. Again, the refusing payment of what we know to be justly due from us; compelling persons to sue us at the law, and so driving them to a ruinous expense that they may obtain their rights; keeping back by fraud the hire of those who have laboured for us in any way[g], the Lord will not hold them guiltless who do such things. If we would hope at the last to be numbered among those who have led an uncorrupt life, and done the thing which was right, and spoken the truth from their heart, and have used no deceit in their tongues, nor done evil to their neighbours[h], we must, in all our dealings with our fellow-men, set these rules before our eyes, and act upon them continually and sincerely:—"*Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*[i]." "*That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such*[k]." "*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*[l]." "*Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; think on these things*[m]."

[f] Prov. xi. 1; Micah vi. 10. [g] Rom. xiii. 7; James v. 4.
[h] Ps. xv. 2, 3. [i] Matt. vii. 12. [k] 1 Thess. iv. 6.
[l] Phil. ii. 4. [m] Ibid. iv. 8.

9. Perhaps of all the commandments which teach us our duty to our neighbour there is not one that we are more apt to break than this, which we must speak of next. This forbids the sins of our tongues; false witness, lying, slandering, evil-speaking; sins of that "little member" of our bodies, which is so prone to evil, that the Apostle calls it "a fire, a world of iniquity [n]," a member that "defileth the whole body," "an unruly evil full of deadly poison." Surely if we bear in mind these words of the Apostle, and if we recal what our own experience of life must teach us,—how commonly and how easily men transgress this commandment; how hard and difficult it is to restrain our tongues; how much of the ordinary conversation in the world around us consists in remarks upon our neighbours' lives and doings, and how sorely tempted we often are to say unkind, uncharitable, unnecessary things; with what keenness and malicious pleasure persons will receive an evil report; and how easy it is, in relating something, to pass, perhaps almost unconsciously, the strict line of truth and fairness,—if we call these things to mind, we must be well convinced that in nothing is God's grace more really needed than in assisting us to "keep our tongue from evil; and our lips, that they speak no guile [o]."

10. The duty enjoined upon us by this last commandment is "contentment." We are not to be envious and covetous of our neighbour's possessions or of his good fortune; but we are to be contented with such things as we have, and are ever to bless God for the

[n] James iii. 2—10. [o] Ps. xxxiv. 13.

many mercies which, through His good providence, we enjoy.

If it be sometimes difficult for us thus to possess our souls in patience, on account of troubles, or misfortunes, or privations that may have befallen us; if we are pressed by want and poverty; our wisdom will be still to strive after the spirit of contentment and patient submission by keeping ever before our minds, not the more prosperous and, as it may seem, happier circumstances of some of our fellow-men, but rather the still deeper afflictions of many of those around us. If we are troubled above measure, there are yet others in the world, let us remember, whose position is still more afflicting; if we are poor and reduced in circumstances, there are others poorer still perchance; if all God's waves and storms have gone over us, yet if we have not made shipwreck of our faith, it is really well with us, and we are indeed unspeakably more blessed than those unhappy ones (be their worldly circumstances what they may) who are living "without God in the world." Even in our deepest woe, and amidst the loss of all that in this life we count most dear, we have comfort in the firm persuasion that nothing in all the world "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord[p]." It is in the thankful contemplation of the many and undeserved mercies still vouchsafed to us through God's goodness, and not in the regretful remembrance of what we have lost, that we may preserve in ourselves that spirit of contentment which, more than any-

[p] Rom. viii. 39.

thing else, will tend to promote our real and lasting happiness.

There is nothing in this commandment, be it observed, which forbids, a man's honest endeavours to improve his circumstances in life, and to raise himself and those who are dependent on his care to a better position, provided only that in his efforts to "do well unto himself" he does not neglect his higher interests and duties. Let every one write these words upon his heart and memory:—"*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*[q]." "*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*[r]." "*We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*[s]." "*Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting, get understanding*[t]." "*What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul*[u]?" If a man will act faithfully, and be ruled by the spirit of these golden exhortations, he may be earnest, active, diligent, wise in the lawful pursuit of this world's goods, and yet give his heart in all sincerity to God; and, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, may avoid that "covetousness" which St. Paul declares to be "idolatry[x]."

[q] Matt. vi. 19, 20. [r] Col. iii. 2. [s] 1 Tim. vi. 7. [t] Prov. iv. 7.
[u] Mark viii. 36, 37; see also Luke xii. 15—21. [x] Col. iii. 5.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND SACRAMENT.

THIS, then, is our baptismal vow. We promise to renounce all God's enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to repent us of our sins; we promise to believe; and we promise to obey. This vow we renew and take upon ourselves afresh at the solemn time of Confirmation. And how are we to keep this sacred promise? Not by our own strength certainly. That were impossible to our frailty. But only by that Divine grace which God gives; which He is ever ready to pour upon us more and more abundantly, and a larger share of which we must seek, and may obtain by earnest hearty *prayer*. Prayer! Let us pause a moment to speak of prayer—the communion of the soul with God. How can its importance be sufficiently declared? What words can be found to impress upon our minds its unspeakable value? Prayer is the very life and strength of the soul. What the breath, which we every moment draw, is to the body, such is prayer to the soul; without it our spirits cannot live. In prayer we find comfort, strength, power to resist and to stand fast, help, grace, blessing. Without prayer we must be weak, unarmed, easily overcome, unstable, hopelessly infirm. See in the following texts what wonderful things are spoken about the all-prevailing power and efficacy of prayer:—Matt. vii. 7—11; Luke xi. 5—13; Matt. xviii. 19; 1 John v. 14, 15; James v. 16—18; John xvi. 23, 24; Matt. xxi. 22; 1 John iii. 21, 22; Mark xi. 24.

Two rules may be given, very shortly, about prayer. First: there should be certain hours of the day at which it should be our custom and habit to offer up our regular devotions; when it should be as natural to us to kneel down to pray, as it would be to do anything else to which we are most accustomed, and to neglect or omit which would cause us some sensible uneasiness of mind. These regular devotions should be so much our habit, as to make it impossible for us to omit them without our feeling at once that we have left undone some known and acknowledged duty, and without our being sensibly warned by our consciences of our neglect. These fixed and stated times for prayer should be, for *all persons*, at least every morning and every evening. And it were better still to follow the example of holy David in this matter: "Evening and morning, *and at noon*, will I pray, and cry aloud[y]," says the Psalmist. This retirement from the world in the middle of the day for prayer, this leaving the busy turmoil and care and anxieties of the world for a little while to enter into the quietness and holy calm of God's more immediate presence, is of inexpressible value to them who would lead a holy life. There is nothing that preserves that even balance of the mind; there is nothing that quiets down those hourly vexations of spirit, to which we are all more or less exposed; there is nothing that makes us stronger and more able to cope with the petty troubles or the serious afflictions of this life than the shaking these off entirely for a little moment, as we rest awhile with

y Ps. lv. 17.

God in prayer, or else (which is better still perhaps) the bringing these before the Lord to seek His guidance, and to obtain from Him a spirit of wisdom and understanding. For some it may be possible to live in the habit of still more frequent prayer, as the Psalmist says, "*Seven times a day* do I praise Thee, because of Thy righteous judgments[z]:" but for most of us it should be the rule to "kneel down upon our knees," as did Daniel of old time, "*three times* a day to pray and give thanks before our God[a]:" and *for none* who would preserve their spiritual life within them, or who would hope to grow in grace, or who would wish to bring forth any good fruits to the honour and glory of God and to the salvation of their own souls,—for none should it be the habit to offer up their devotions less frequently than every night and morning.

Secondly: we should form a habit,—a habit the excellence and necessity of which cannot possibly be overestimated, — of lifting up our thoughts to God *continually*, of appealing to Him, of seeking His aid and counsel and guidance in everything, and on all occasions; a habit of referring all that we do, all our affairs, all our wants and difficulties and doubts, all our daily and hourly joys and sorrows,—referring all these to God; communing with Him, as with our wisest and closest friend, of all these things; doubting nothing that He hears, and is patient to consider the voice of our supplication: for though He is the Lord our God, that hath His dwelling so high, yet He "humbleth Himself

[z] Ps. cxix. 164. [a] Daniel vi. 10.

to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth[b]." This is to obey the Apostle's injunction, to "*pray without ceasing*[c]." It is not meant that these upliftings of the heart to God should be long or formal or studied; rather they are to be quick and momentary, as occasion may require. But the value of this habit, and the strength that this will impart to the soul, in all its unceasing conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil, is beyond all power of expressing.

We scarcely require telling that at all times of our more regular devotions we should ever use that model of all prayers, which our Lord has left for the comfort and edification of His Church.

On the subject of the Lord's Prayer notice the one great lesson which we are taught herein, viz. that in all our prayers we are to seek *first God's* honour and glory; and are then, and secondly, to make known our own wants and necessities. Thus we pray, first, "*Hallowed be Thy Name*,"—we beseech God, that by His grace (for of ourselves we cannot do this) we may ever glorify in our lives and conversations that great name which is holy and reverend: again, "*Thy kingdom come*," that is, may the time be hastened when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ[d]:" again, "*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*," that is, may we render as perfect an obedience to God in our lives here on earth, as do the holy angels, who surround God's throne in heaven. Then, secondly, we make known unto God our own personal necessities: "*Give us this day our daily*

[b] Ps. cxiii. 6. [c] 1 Thess. v. 17. [d] Rev. xi. 15.

bread;" give us, that is, all that we require for the support of our souls and bodies. How do these words teach us the need we have of frequent prayer! Our petition is only for this day's wants; we ask not for to-morrow: He who bade us "take no thought for the morrow," would have us pray "day by day" for the supply of each day's returning need. Again, "*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;*" with what force and significance is the law of charity here declared! we may not even supplicate for God's forgiveness on ourselves, except on the condition that we forgive all others fully and freely their trespasses against us: then, "*Lead us not into temptation,*" that is, suffer us not to be tempted above what we are able to bear; with our temptations make a way for our escape; let Thy grace be sufficient to us in our time of need: "*But deliver us from evil;*" deliver us from all dangers to our souls and bodies; deliver us from the Evil One, from the power of sin, from all things that may hurt and defile our souls, and from all adversities that may happen to our bodies. Thus are we taught to have a regard first to God's glory, (and this should be the rule of all our lives, since for God's "pleasure all things are and were created[e]"): and then, secondly, to cast all our earthly cares upon Him, who careth for us[f]. In this manner, therefore, let us ever pray. And while we so live in continual fervent prayer to God, we shall never lack that Divine grace, that heavenly strength which may support us in all our warfare against our spiritual foes.

[e] Rev. iv. 11. [f] 1 Pet. v. 7.

Be it remembered, too, that when young persons come to take their baptismal vow upon themselves, solemnly to ratify and confirm it, they have the promise of a more abundant share of God's Holy Spirit to direct, sanctify, and govern them in all their future lives. The laying on their heads of the bishop's hands at Confirmation is a special sign and assurance to them that God will impart to their souls—if they are seeking these in earnestness and sincerity—the abundant graces of the Holy Ghost. This indwelling of the Holy Spirit was it which God bestowed in the early ages of the Church's existence. When the Apostles laid their hands on the disciples' heads, there followed immediately the gift of the Holy Ghost; a gift evidenced and made plain by the miraculous powers which they, who were confirmed, possessed[g]. In these latter days, when the Church is established in the world, when "the grain of mustard seed[h]" is at length become a mighty "tree," such miraculous powers are no longer needed. These extraordinary gifts, therefore, of the Holy Ghost have ceased. But still do we look for His ordinary gifts, His common gifts, those gifts which are needed by all men and in all times. Still do we pray that "the Holy Ghost the Comforter may strengthen them that are confirmed, and daily increase in them His manifold gifts of grace, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and the spirit of His holy fear." And still do we look for the evidences

[g] Acts xix. 6. [h] Matt. xiii. 31.

of the Holy Spirit's presence in those "fruits of the Spirit" which St. Paul enumerates, such as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance[1],—these evidences of the Holy Spirit's presence we look for; we pray that these may follow in the hearts and conversation of all those on whom the bishop lays his hands at Confirmation.

And how is it possible for us to think enough of this most blessed grace and presence of the Holy Spirit? Do we remember that from the Holy Ghost alone come all holy desires and all good counsels of our hearts? Do we know that the very ability to lay hold of God's proffered mercies cometh from Him alone? Do we know that He only can quicken our faith, that He only can rouse our dull hearts and kindle our cold affections, that He only can render us loving, dutiful, obedient; and that through His sanctifying influence alone we can appreciate, or apprehend, or profit by Christ's great work for our souls? Are we sensible of this? Is the remembrance of it written and engraven on our hearts and minds? How inestimable, then, how priceless in its value must be that gift, that indwelling Presence, which does effect so much in us; which can enlighten our understanding, which can elevate and purify our affections, which can at first bring us unto Christ, and then cause us to abide in Him. How *good* must be that gift which is poured out on them, who seek it in sincerity, at the moment of their Confirmation. And how careful should we be that we grieve not this Holy Spirit of God, that

[1] Gal. v. 22.

e do no despite unto His grace, that we never wil-
ıllу resist Him, neither provoke Him through our
›bstinacy to withdraw His presence from the temple
of our bodies.

Moreover, there is one other channel of Divine grace opened to us at the time of our Confirmation. All who have been confirmed are invited to partake of that other Sacrament—the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, wherein their souls may be strengthened and supported. As by the one Sacrament of Baptism we were first joined to Christ, the fountain of all spiritual life and strength, so in this other Sacrament we find again and again an ever new and increasing bond of union with our Lord. It was the work of the Holy Spirit at first to graft us on to Christ in Baptism; so is it also His holy work to impart to us and to fit us to receive Christ in this feast of love, to make our souls capable of partaking spiritually of Christ's Body and Blood. As it is said, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," so also is it added, "and have been all made to drink into one Spirit[k]." Christ appointed this second Sacrament for this very end, that we might continually be brought closer and closer tc Himself, that we might receive more of Him, mor grace, more strength, more spiritual life and healtl And to this Sacrament we are first admitted at th time of our lives when we stand in the greatest ne of Divine grace. We are invited to the Lord's ta upon our Confirmation, when we are taking upon c selves our baptismal promises, when we are stan

[k] 1 Cor. xii. 13.

out before God and His Church solemnly to declare ourselves to be Christ's soldiers and servants, solemnly to confirm with our own lips and in our own persons those vows once made by our god-parents in our behalf. Then are we invited to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to partake spiritually of Christ's precious Body and Blood, to be drawn closer unto our Lord; yea, to dwell in Him and He in us, to be one with Him and He with us.

Notice shortly four points in the Holy Communion.

1. In our coming to the Lord's table there is obedience to Christ's command, to His almost dying wish. How inexpressibly sacred should this be in all Christians' eyes! Our Lord has said, "Do this[l]." And no command of Christ's may be neglected on peril of our soul's salvation[m].

2. It is in this Sacrament that we plead with God the Father, in the most solemn way, the precious death and sacrifice of Christ. It is through Christ's death upon the cross alone that we may obtain remission of our sins, or that we may be made partakers of the kingdom of heaven. Here, in this Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; with these symbols of Christ's death; partaking of this Bread which Christ has affirmed to be His "Body[n]," once torn and broken; partaking of

[l] Luke xxii. 19; Matt. xxvi. 26; 1 Cor. xi. 24.

[m] John vi. 53.

[n] Matt. xxvi. 26. "To such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking

this wine which Christ has affirmed to be His Blood[o], once shed upon the accursed "tree," we come before the Holy Father and humbly plead the death and merits of His only Son, beseeching Him to accept that death in the stead of our death, (who for our sins deserve to die,) and to grant us, for those merits' sake, that everlasting life which we could never win ourselves.

3. There is the special and peculiar blessing to be obtained, which is *union with Christ*, and, through this union, grace and strength. Our Lord's own words are, "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him[p]." And thus our prayer in the Communion Service is, "Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the Flesh of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink His Blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most precious Blood, and that we may evermore *dwell in Him and He in us*." In this Sacrament Christ does impart Himself to us. Mysteriously present, He verily and indeed communicates Himself to our souls. So St. Paul's words are, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ[q]?" And the Church teaches us that "of

of the Blood of Christ. . . . . The Body of Christ is given, tak and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiri manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is rece and eaten in the Supper is Faith."—*Article XXVIII.*

[o] Matt. xxvi. 28. [p] John vi. 56. [q] 1 Cor. x. 1

heavenly Father hath given His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, not only to die for us, but also to be our spiritual food and sustenance in that Holy Sacrament." See Matt. xxvi. 26—28; Mark xiv. 22—24; Luke xxii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 23—27.

4. We partake of this holy Sacrament *in remembrance* of Christ; for the remembering His inestimable love, His Cross and Passion; for the "shewing the Lord's death till He come." Hereby we continually revive in our own hearts, we strengthen and renew that gratitude and thankfulness to our Redeemer, which should ever be our first and latest thought, which should be indeed the ruling principle of all our lives. (*Here parts of the Communion Service should be read over and explained.*)

And what is there necessary in those who would come to this Holy Sacrament? What must they do who would prepare themselves for the worthy celebration of it? They must first examine their past lives, that they may learn wherein they have offended against the laws of God or man; and then must they earnestly repent them of their sins and honestly purpose to amend their lives in every respect. If they have offended any one, if they have done any wrong or injury to their neighbour, "they must make restitution and satisfaction according to the uttermost of their powers, being likewise ready to forgive others that have offended them." This must they do with an humble reliance on God's mercy in Jesus Christ, with a lively faith in that holy Saviour, and with hearty thanks to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy

Ghost for the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ. If they will come so prepared and in such a spirit of repentance, faith, and love, they need not fear lest they should not find acceptance with God. Our Lord's own gracious promise is, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out[r]."

Let it be observed here, that it is not well to be too curious or anxious as to how and in what manner Christ communicates Himself to us in this holy Sacrament. Suffice it to us to remember that our Lord has been pleased to declare, that the faithful reception of these outward and visible signs—these creatures of bread and wine—shall certainly impart to our souls some inward and spiritual grace; yea, even Christ Himself. But since this inward grace is *spiritual*,—Christ, through the working of the Holy Spirit, and according to the mysterious and to us unfathomable laws which govern spiritual things, communicating Himself to our *spirits*, entering into us and dwelling with us, and uniting us unto Himself in some way absolutely inappreciable to our senses,—it must be evident, that though we may fully believe in this spiritual communion with our most holy Saviour, (since His Word assures us of it,) and though we may indeed realize its effects upon the hidden life of our spirits, yet the precise manner in which it is effected in us must ever remain to our weak human understanding a mystery which is past our comprehension. Let us be content with this. We question not, neither do we doubt about the existence of our souls and spirits.

[r] John vi. 37.

Let us accept with a like unhesitating belief the blessing which is imparted to those unseen spirits.

But we hear persons talk sometimes of candidates for Confirmation being *too young* to present themselves as guests at the Supper of the Lord. Alas, what an unhappy thought! Are you too young to be exposed to the crafts and assaults of the devil? too young to be surrounded by every kind of temptation? Are you too young, then, *to need God's grace?* Are you too young to come to serve the Lord? Has not the Wise Man said, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth*?" Are you too young "to choose between God and mammon?" Are you too young to "refuse the evil and choose the good?" Are you too young to dedicate yourselves to God's service, to enlist yourselves beneath Christ's banner? If so, why are you here presenting yourselves for Confirmation? Ah, let none be deceived or led astray by such false, ungodly, miserable arguments. Rather remember that God loves young hearts. God wills to be served by them who are still fresh, and pure, and unspotted by the grosser sins of this wicked world. God calls these especially to Himself, and these, if they will hear His voice, shall certainly be filled with all grace and spiritual benediction.

If it be meant, indeed, by any young person that he is not in earnest in his intention to serve the Lord, that he has no desire to cleave unto the Lord with his whole heart, and that therefore he fears to profane the holy Sacrament with his presence; to such an one

* Eccles. xii. 1.

it certainly must be answered; In God's name, approach not to the table of thy Lord; for coming with neither love, nor faith, nor penitence, nor sincerity, thou wilt surely eat and drink to thine own condemnation! But then to such an one it must be likewise added, Come not either to this holy rite of Confirmation; for if thou comest there with a lie in thy right hand, to vow falsely and hypocritically unto the Lord thy God, purposing not to perform thy vows,—if thou comest thus to take God's holy name in vain, thou wilt surely find a curse and not a blessing.

But there are some who think humbly and sorrowfully that they are not worthy to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that they are not good enough. Let these be comforted and assured. In one sense, indeed, none can be thought worthy to partake of so great blessing; and so in the service for the Holy Communion our confession is, "We do not presume to come to this Thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table." Let us remember, however, that we are not admitted to our Lord's table as a *reward for our goodness*, but we come there *to be made good*. We come there seeking Christ therein. How can we become good without that grace which we receive from Christ? Have we such spiritual strength in ourselves? Is not Christ the only fountain of all life? When we come to the Holy Communion, we come seeking from Christ that grace and spiritual strength which He only can impart to us, and

which our souls so sorely need. That Sacrament is the special means of grace, the very means above all others whereby Christ would impart some strength and refreshing to our weary souls. It is not (be it again and again repeated) a sense of *past sins*—of past sins which we humbly sorrow over—which will make us unworthy to approach Christ's table. A *present love of sin*, a wish and intention to *continue* in our sins, a wilful determination to persist in ungodly ways, this only (and this does so most surely) makes us unworthy and unfitted to present ourselves as guests at the Supper of our Lord,—this, and a careless ungodly disbelief in the blessedness of that holy Sacrament.

But if any will come with penitent, faithful, and loving hearts, they need fear nothing. God will mercifully accept them; Christ will draw them nearer and still nearer to Himself; the Holy Spirit will direct, govern, and sanctify their hearts: and in the Divine strength which they obtain in that and in all other appointed means of grace, they shall be enabled to stand fast in the evil day; they shall "lay aside the sin which doth so easily beset them[t]," and they shall go out and shew themselves Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto their lives' end.

[t] Heb. xii. 1.

PRINTED BY MESSRS. PARKER, CORNMARKET, OXFORD.